

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or* **AWAKENED INDIA**

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



July 2016

Vol. 121, No. 7

₹ 15.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Analysis of Vedanta Philosophy I

The first group of religious ideas that we see coming up—I mean recognized religious ideas, and not the very low ideas, which do not deserve the name of religion—all include the idea of inspiration and revealed books and so forth. The first group of religious ideas starts with the idea of God. Here is the universe, and this universe is created by a certain Being. Everything that is in this universe has been created by Him. Along with that, at a later stage, comes the idea of soul—that there is this body, and something inside this body which is not the body. This is the most primitive idea of religion that we know. We can find a few followers of that in India, but it was given up very early. The Indian religions take a peculiar start. It is only by strict analysis, and much calculation and conjecture that we can ever think that that stage existed in Indian religions. The tangible state in which we find them is the next step, not the first one. At the earliest step the idea of creation is very peculiar, and it is that the whole universe is created out of zero, at the will of God; that all this universe did not exist, and out of this nothingness all this has come. In the next stage we find this conclusion is questioned. How can existence be produced out of non-existence? At the first step in the Vedanta this question is asked. If this universe is existent it must have come out of something, because it was very easy to see that nothing comes out of nothing, anywhere. All work that is done by human hands requires



materials. If a house is built, the material was existing before; if a boat is made the material existed before; if any implements are made, the materials were existing before. So the effect is produced. Naturally, therefore, the first idea that this world was created out of nothing was rejected, and some material out of which this world was created was wanted. The whole history of religion, in fact, is this search after that material. Out of what has all this been produced? Apart from the question of the efficient cause, or God, apart from the question that God created the universe, the great question of all questions is: Out of what did He create it? All the philosophies are turning, as it were, on this question. One solution is that nature, God, and soul are eternal existences, as if three lines are running parallel eternally, of which nature and soul comprise what they call the dependent, and God the independent Reality. Every soul, like every particle of matter, is perfectly dependent on the will of God.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.393-94.

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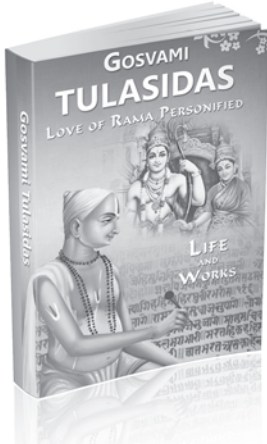


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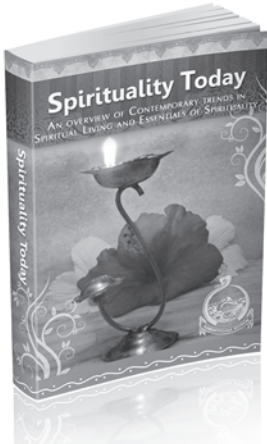
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The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The day of inauguration has been fixed tentatively as 13th November 2016, Sunday.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 15 Crores. So far Rs. 11.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 04.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co-operation immensely.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

Vishnupadananda

(Swami Vishnupadananda)
Secretary

Proposed Universal Temple of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna



Model of the Proposed New Temple

Temple Dimensions

Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft. Height: 100 ft.

Temple Construction Area : 18000 Sq.ft.

Garbhagriha : 24ft. x 24ft.

Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation

70ft. x 40ft. Seating Capacity - 450

Auditorium (Ground Floor)

80ft. x 57ft. Seating Capacity - 500

The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone
and interior in Ambaji and Makarana marble.

Ceiling of the Temple Hall will be done in Teak Wood

Estimated Cost : Rs. 15 Crores

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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

July 2016
Vol. 121, No. 7

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं महानदीषूर्मय इवानिवर्तकमस्य यत्पुराकृतं समुद्रवेलेव दुर्निवार्यमस्य मृत्योरागमनं
सदसत्फलमयैः पाशैः पङ्कुरिव बद्धं बन्धनस्थस्येवास्वातन्त्र्यं यमविषयस्थस्यैव बहुभयावस्थं मदिरो-
न्मत्त इव मोहमदिरोन्मत्तं पाप्मना गृहीत इव भ्राम्यमाणं महोरगदष्ट इव विषयदष्टं महान्धकारमिव
रागान्धमिन्द्रजालमिव मायामयं स्वप्न इव मिथ्यादर्शनं कदलीगर्भ इवासारं नट इव क्षणवेषं
चित्रभित्तिरिव मिथ्यामनोरममित्यथोक्तम् । शब्दस्पर्शादयो ह्यर्था मर्त्येऽनर्था इवास्थिताः । येषां
सक्तस्तु भूतात्मा न स्मरेत परं पदम्

118.211

*Atha-anything-uktam mahanadishurmaya iva-anivartakam-asya yat purakritam samudra-vel-
eva durnivaryam-asya mrityor-agamanam sad-asat-phalamayaib pashaih panguriva baddham
bandhanasthasyeva-asvatantryam yama-vishayasthasyaiva bahubhayavastham madirommatta
iva mohamadirommattam papmana grihita iva bhramyamanam mahoragadashtha iva vishaya-
dashtham mahandhakaramiva ragandham-indrajalamiva mayamayam svapna iva mithyadar-
shanam kadaligarbha iva-asaram nata iva kshanavesham chitrabhittiriva mithyamanoramam-
ity-athoktam. Shabda-sparshadayo hyartha martye'nartha iva-asthitah. Yesham saktastu bhutat-
ma na smareta param padam.*

(4.2)

And it has been said elsewhere also. Like the waves in large rivers, past actions cannot be un-
done. Like the ocean tide, the approach of death cannot be stalled. Like a lame man, bound
by the fetters of the fruits of good and evil, like a prisoner lacking independence, beset by
many fears like one under the control of death, intoxicated with the liquor of delusion like
one intoxicated by liquor, like one wandering about caught by evil propensities, bitten by
sense-objects like one bitten by a great snake, the darkness of passion like intense darkness,
full of illusion like magic, false appearance like a dream, unsubstantial like the inside of a
banana tree, changing appearances every moment like an actor, falsely delighting the mind
like a painted scene, and therefore it has been said: 'Objects of sound, touch, and the like,
are worthless to a person, attached to them, the elemental soul does not remember the high-
est state.

(4.2)

THIS MONTH

SURRENDER HAS MOSTLY BEEN seen as a devotional practice. It is considered the epitome of bhakti. Can the path of Advaita have surrender as a practice? Can a person practising the non-dual path resort to an attitude of surrender? If yes, to whom or to what will an Advaitic aspirant surrender? These questions are explored in **Advaitic Surrender**.

In **Changing the Question: Philosophy and the Problem of Education**, Kaustuv Roy, professor of sociology and philosophy at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, examines the handling of the study of education in India and critically explores a philosophical approach of such study, focussing on the problems involved and explaining its interdisciplinary nature.

Sri Ramakrishna had an inimitable way of expounding abstruse concepts through simple parables. I S Madugula, a retired English teacher from Austin, Texas and Sudha Emany, English teacher at the Vivekananda Institute of Languages, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, illustrate how Sri Ramakrishna's life itself was a great parable in **The Parable of the Paramahansa**.

Swami Vivekananda had his own views on ethics that can be worked on to create a unique ethical framework. In **Swami Vivekananda's Ontological Ethics**, Dilipkumar Mohanta, professor of philosophy at Calcutta University, juxtaposes Swamiji's thoughts with the ideas of Immanuel Kant and the Upanishads.

The unreality of the waking and dream states is analysed in the sixth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya**

Upanishad given by Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. The third instalment of the collection of such questions and his answers to them is given in **Vedanta Answers**.

A spirit of service to God can turn even mundane tasks into spiritual practices. This is told in the sixth instalment of Swami Omkarnishwarananda's recounting of **Swami Premananda's Teachings**. This has been translated from the Bengali book *Premananda*.

The problems of attachment and ego are discussed in the fifth instalment of **The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life** by Swami Nityasthananda, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru.

It is Not Good to Forget Good Done to You teaches us that we should remember all good done to us and should try to return the favour. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

In the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of her popular book, **Mindfulness**, Ellen J Langer, professor of psychology at Harvard University, emphasises the growing need for cultivating mindfulness and avoiding unhealthy mental attitudes. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Advaitic Surrender

ADVAITA MEANS BELIEF in a singular ultimate reality, of which there is no second. Surrender implies a person surrendering to another. So, how can there be an idea of surrender in Advaita? It is a common allegation against Advaita that it has little or no scope for practice. A devotee can worship, sing devotional songs, perform rituals; what can the follower of Advaita do? This stereotypical stance has led to two extreme positions among the followers of Advaita or their opponents. The first position is that Advaita is only a path to believe in, which needs to be supplemented by devotional tools like worship, singing, or rituals. In effect, they think that Advaita is just a concept and has no practical aspect. The other position is to believe that Advaita is nothing but contemplating and studying scriptures that talk of the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, the ultimate reality. For this group, there can be no practical aspect of Advaita either, not even as a supplement from other spiritual disciplines. They indulge in study, discussion, and contemplation of various texts their entire lives. This leads to the question: Does Advaita have any practical aspect of engaging in some spiritual practice?

Before we address this question, we need to understand how the Advaitic path is not so different from other spiritual disciplines of Sanatana Dharma when seen from its absolute standpoint, the standpoint of the person who is established in the Advaitic truth. Advaita emphasises the unitary identity of reality. The follower of Advaita has to realise this reality in the

here and the now. That is a tall order indeed! And that is precisely the ground for objection by the followers of other spiritual disciplines. Advaita

Falsity necessitates insignificance. Thus, this universe and one's body and mind are insignificant. Insignificance generates indifference.

is too difficult to practise. This conclusion is arrived at by seeing that the goal is lofty. Now, let us see the path of devotion or bhakti. The goal of a devotee is to realise one's relationship with the divine. The specific relationship would vary from person to person. For instance, a particular devotee would be more comfortable following the path of being a child of God. The spiritual goal of that person would be to realise this relationship. Is that an easy task? Definitely not! However, since it is clothed in the language of human relationships that we seem to understand or at least claim to understand, it becomes so simple all of a sudden! But, it is anything but simple. To have an unalloyed belief in the existence of God and to have a living and real relationship with God is not different from realising the identity of the individual soul and Brahman. They are only different readings of the same unitary principle. Just as an Advaitic aspirant finds it difficult to be established in the non-dual truth, so also a devotional aspirant finds it difficult to relate to God.


Belief is the bedrock of any discipline. That is true even of reason. Every rational person believes in the axioms of logic. Without such belief,

even reason would crumble to dust. Hence, the Advaitic aspirant needs to believe in the identity of the individual soul and Brahman. She or he needs to believe that this universe is a result of an ignorant understanding of the one indivisible reality. Rooted in this belief, the Advaitic aspirant sees that the universe, including one's body and mind, is false. And false are all dealings in and with this universe. Falsity necessitates insignificance. A false phenomenon is insignificant. Thus, this universe and one's body and mind are insignificant. Insignificance generates indifference. Nobody gives an ear to a person of no credibility, who claims to revolutionise the world. If one is convinced of the falsity and the consequent insignificance of this universe, why would one bother about it? When the Advaitic aspirant is convinced of the unreality of the universe, she or he is indifferent to the body and the mind and automatically dissociates oneself from desires. It becomes clear that whatever happens in this universe is nothing but an illusion. Therefore, the aspirant does not have any connection with these apparent happenings. The ideas of 'enjoyership' and 'doership' are given up. The aspirant gets the clear conviction that one is neither the doer nor the enjoyer of this apparent universe.

Just being anchored in one's true personality, the Advaitic aspirant is unruffled by the extremes of experiences in this world. There is no elation or depression. Nothing perturbs such a person. What happens when one reads an autobiographical narrative of the adventurous undertakings of a great person? When one becomes concerned about the safety of the author indulging in such exploits, the mind reminds the reader that nothing fatal would happen to the protagonist, because the author has survived to jot down these experiences. When a famous hunter recounts the tales of coming face-to-face with man-eaters, the reader of such accounts is assured of the safety of

the hunter; else there would have been nothing to read! Similarly, convinced of one's true nature, which is beyond the farthest reaches of this universe, the Advaitic aspirant acts as a mute witness to whatever happens apparently as though they were words printed on the pages of a book or the fleeting images on a cinema screen.

Conviction is conclusive of any spiritual discipline. In Advaita, the conclusion one arrives at, is the unreality of this universe in its apparent form. Such a conclusion leads to a complete annihilation of the sense of doership or enjoyership. From the time of arriving at such a conclusion, there is no volition of the Advaitic aspirant to 'do' or 'enjoy' or experience anything. Just as a devotee taking refuge in God, ceases to have volition in anything, an Advaitic aspirant ceases to exercise willpower. Knowing all 'work' to be futile, the Advaitic aspirant stops working. Hypocrites beware; such cessation of work is possible only when one is truly convinced of the unreality of this apparent universe. Else, stopping work would only lead to a perturbed mind. An Advaitic aspirant does not stop actions voluntarily, that simply happens as soon as the conviction arises and the conclusion is arrived at.

From this point, the aspirant surrenders oneself to the effect of past actions done with the sense of 'doership' and 'enjoyership'. Acts of volition of the past, before the conclusion of the unreality of the apparent universe was arrived at, continue to produce results. Just like the braking distance of a vehicle brought about by the force of the momentum of the vehicle after the brakes have been applied, the Advaitic aspirant waits in patience and conviction for the force of the momentum of the past actions to subside. The Advaitic surrender is a surrender of one's body and mind to the effects of past actions. A person with such surrender is the proverbial lotus leaf onto which nothing sticks. 

Changing the Question: Philosophy and the Problem of Education

Kaustuv Roy

IN A RECENT PHILOSOPHY of education conference held at a university in Bengaluru, a panel was asked to consider a problem worded thus:

Philosophy of education courses in Indian colleges and universities follow one of the following patterns: a) the student is introduced to various 'isms' such as idealism, realism, naturalism, and pragmatism, and so on. The individual chapters on one 'ism' or the other invariably ends with a section titled 'Implications for Education'; and b) the second pattern consists in textbooks that have individual chapters devoted to writers on education, both Indian and European. The contents of each chapter comprise long quotations on a range of educational topics with sparse commentary by the author of the textbook. Though both of these approaches have been under fire for decades and every variant of these have been critically and intellectually rejected, in this country, however, they have come to define *the ways* of doing philosophy of education. Therefore the questions for consideration are: 1) Given the above, what are we to do? 2) How should one begin to think about questions that a distinctively philosophical approach to education should raise and attend to? 3) How are we to understand and characterise what is distinctively philosophical here and thereby distinguish such a treatment of questions from the way other disciplines attend to them? 4) Are there specific tools and problematics that require explicit foregrounding? 5) If so, what are they and why are these important and worth adopting? 6) How would such

philosophical approaches contribute towards a better understanding of educational projects?

As one of the panelists in the above conference, I, along with my co-panelists were confronted with the task of beginning a conversation that seeks a way out of the quagmire in which philosophy of education in India found itself at present. My attempt in this paper will be to recollect, expand, and present my response to the above set of pressing questions. In doing so, I affirm the above questions as valid and believe that we desperately need another line of thinking in education, especially in India, and it behooves philosophy to take on this task.

Let me begin then with the question of an adequate philosophical approach to education. First, when we are faced with a fundamental crisis as delineated in the above set of questions and assertions, it is useful to begin by doubting the very categories of our understanding that are being employed in the process. In the present case, I would like to submit that we are partly in this predicament because we have gotten used to thinking in terms of categories that are essentially empty. Let me try to explain what I mean by examining the word 'philosophy' itself. The word philosophy, as we hardly need to be reminded, literally means 'love of wisdom', and certainly, what else could philosophy be? Now, if we supplant the word 'philosophy' by 'love of wisdom' in 'philosophy of education', the terminology will now read

'love-of-wisdom-of-education'. The construct not only seems aesthetically and syntactically unpleasing, but it also gives us no clue as to how to visualise this beast. On the other hand, it might alert us to the possibility that there is something not quite right. While this seeming bit of pedantry and wordplay might appear offensive to some, it actually points to the need that the field that passes muster as philosophy of education be seriously rethought. And the etymology is not the only reason why.

Let us take another step and go to the roots of Western philosophy and look at its relation with education. In Socrates, or Plato's Socrates, for example, the arising of reason, which is the highest philosophical action, *is* the condition of education. That is to say, the doing of philosophy *is* education. As a converse, it would be true to say that where there is no philosophy there is no education of the adequate kind. And what does it mean to say 'education of the adequate kind'? For Socrates, right education led to a life of non-contradiction.

Socrates believed that the purification of the soul from its contradictions would bring it, as a matter of course, to knowledge. But in the soul which is not free from contradictions there is no advantage to right opinions over any other, similarly unexamined, opinions. ... Plato stresses his Socrates' new concept of reason (*nous*). Reason is not a tool for attaining goals independently thought worthwhile: possessions, honour, personal and political success; rather, rationality itself, expressed in the giving of reasons and the avoidance of contradictions, confers value to goals and opinions. The ultimate educational objective, then, is to bring about a revolution in the educand's perception of the role of reason ... Plato's theory of education aims at specifying the conditions of the growth of the Socratic man, whose soul is free from contradictions and whose excellence is justified knowledge.¹

Philosophically, when reason has no other instrumental purpose than its own flowering in the human being leading to freedom from contradiction, we come upon the authentic process of education. In other words, education is nothing other than the becoming of the Socratic being and philosophy is nothing other than what facilitates it. They are two sides of the same coin. But instead, when we mistakenly separate philosophy from education, then we disembowel both. Disembodied knowledge divorced from philosophical practice becomes corruption.

For me the question therefore is not 'what is philosophy of education' but *what kind of philosophy is education?* In other words, doing what kind of philosophy leads to proper education of the human being? I would like to submit that there is no richer source than Indian philosophy for considering that question. In Sanskrit, the etymological root of both *shiksha*, education and *shastra*, philosophical treatise, is the same, namely, *shas*, meaning to discipline or to teach. A philosopher *lived* the philosophical life of discipline and hence was the teacher. The *guru* taught the student through the example of his own life. Today, by contrast, one could live the unexamined life of the thoughtless and yet be a teacher by virtue of formal appropriation of disembodied knowledge.

But to go back to the question 'what kind of philosophy is education', first we have to say something about education itself, or rather what has become of education in the present day; otherwise the question becomes a non-starter. In the Christian world, the roots of modern education belong to that time in world history when the search for God and divine order was gradually being supplanted by the search for the good life and the systematic founding of a human order.

Corruption occurs when the Church begins to respond to the failure and inadequacy of a motivation grounded in a sense of mutual

belonging by erecting a system. This system incorporates a code or set of rules, a set of disciplines to make us internalize these rules, and a system of rationally constructed organizations—private and public bureaucracies, universities, schools—to make sure we carry out what the rules demand. All these become second nature to us. We grow accustomed to de-centring ourselves from our lived, embodied experience in order to become disciplined, rational, disengaged subjects.²

The search for divine light and guidance was gradually replaced by the love for organising worldly matter, and the quest for embodied experience was substituted by the seeking of mental representation, human reason. Such large-scale developments on a society-wide basis required systematisation through newly emerging codes, rules, and values. And the latter were in turn institutionalised by a system of rationally constructed organisations, chief among whom were schools and universities. To say that this had profound consequences for human societies as well as for other beings on the planet is to say very little—these developments were causal to the very emergence of the newly constituted subject-individual or modern man.

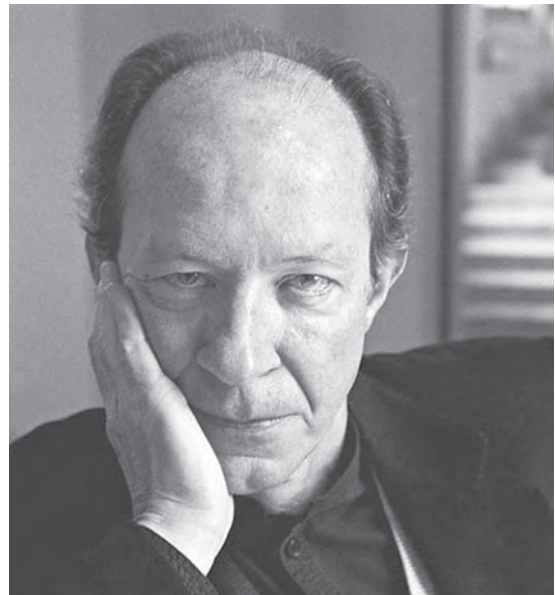
In other words, education was knit instrumentally into the altered world view and the consequent societal developments. It eventually emerged as a techno-rational field that was devoted mainly to the production of a suitable political subject and the acquisition of representational knowledge that was deemed appropriate for it. The making of the ‘disciplined and disengaged’ subject, well removed from its phenomenological reality, was the triumph of abstract reason and the philosophy that belonged to it. This philosophy, by its very obsession with abstract knowledge, propagated a split between being and action on the one hand, and mind and body on the other, giving rise to a schizophrenic

reality as well as distorted object relations within that reality. The major error therefore lies in separating philosophy from daily lived action.³

A philosophy that makes no demands on the being of the person and plays no part in her or his becoming, and instead engages only in various abstract taxonomical or analytical exercises, is no philosophy at all, for there is neither love nor wisdom in it, far less the love *of* wisdom. Thus, by the time we are into early modernity the gradual professionalisation of philosophy and its division into epistemology and ontology reduces philosophy into just another discipline of study. It is not difficult to see how such a formalised abstract philosophy cannot do much for education other than expand its scope as discourse.

The question before us then is how should we begin to think differently about philosophy with respect to education? We began by changing the question from ‘what is philosophy of education’ to ‘what kind of philosophy is education’? And to take that discussion further I would like to argue that there is no better ground for philosophical praxis than Indian

Giorgio Agamben (b.1942)



philosophy: the various schools of Indian philosophy such as yoga and tantra show the inner processes of the human being to be just as fascinating and intriguing as the objective knowledge of science. And what is more important is that this understanding of the being of the human is not mediated by intellectual or conceptual categories but by direct and intimate contact with the thing-in-itself. Contrary to the claims of one of the celebrated philosophers of the West, Immanuel Kant, who insisted that one could have no knowledge of the world other than through indirect conceptual categories, Indian philosophical practice has shown the way to direct phenomenological contact with the being and becoming of the human. In other words, one may take charge of one's own growth and becoming through philosophical action.

In classical Indian philosophers' view 'education' is a means of transforming human beings from a lower state to a higher state. Education must liberate small minds and transform them to universal mind. On one hand, it should take care of the basic needs of one and all, on the other, it should also show the path to move towards their ultimate goal of life. The 'education' which does not take into account the ultimate goal of life namely, a sense of fulfillment, is no education at all. In other words, 'education' must aim at transforming a man in such a way that he or she ultimately gets a feeling of 'fulfillment' or from 'exclusiveness' to 'inclusiveness'. Transformation is understood as gradual 'freedom from narrowness or bondage' and complete transformation will mean complete freedom from all narrowness, conditioned state of mind, and identification of the universals. The classical Indian philosophers have identified that ultimate state as the state of discovering one's own self. A true education must lead one to that state ultimately. No 'education' which does not do this job is worth its name.⁴

Education is not the mere gathering of

knowledge for understanding and manipulating material objects; it is the very transformation of the human from a lower ontological state to a higher order of being. One can see that the transformation sought through education is an ontological one, unlike Western philosophy which has more and more side-stepped ontology and virtually put all its eggs in the epistemological basket, believing that all meaningful educational experience is in thought.⁵

The possibility of going beyond the finitude of the individual mind to a trans-individual consciousness is a bold experiment, the promise of which is held out by several Eastern schools of thought. For the rest of the article, I will present some of the useful transformative notions taken from these schools, which are experiential, and which are often common to them, although known by different terminologies. Taken together, these might constitute a useful ground for exploring what could become an alternative way to think and practise philosophy of education.

If living a life of non-contradiction, as Socrates demanded and echoed by Eastern thought, is accepted as one of the reasonable goals of philosophy then the notion of *dvanda* or conflict is a good place to begin. Human beings are torn by conflict, at the individual as well as the societal level. In *Emile*, his famous treatise on education, Rousseau gives a useful account of the two-faced nature of our efforts to educate leading to contradiction:

I do not consider our ridiculous colleges as public institutes, nor do I include under this head a fashionable education, for this education facing two ways at once achieves nothing. It is only fit to turn out hypocrites, always professing to live for others, while thinking of themselves alone. These professions, however, deceive no one, for everyone has his share in them; they are so much labour wasted. Our inner conflicts are caused by these contradictions. Drawn this

way by nature and that way by man, compelled to yield to both forces, we make a compromise and reach neither goal. We go through life, struggling and hesitating, and die before we have found peace, useless alike to ourselves and to others.⁶

Rousseau is categorical in his rejection of an education that only promotes conflict and contradiction. We say that we are educating to bring about an enlightened citizenry but the educational process actually turns out self-centred individuals who neither understand themselves nor know how to engage with the collective. They are torn between opposing impulses, striking up various compromises whose consequence is a life lived in contradiction. Among the Indian philosophical texts, the Bhagavadgita has much to say about conflict and contradiction and speaks time and again of the importance of the state of *dvandatita* or *nirdvanda*, a state of being without contradiction. A new quality of energy is found when the psyche renounces contradiction and we become whole. This movement of wholeness is truly transformative and can therefore achieve the larger aim of education, which is to lead a wholesome life.

However, a life without contradiction is not easy to achieve, especially in the 'modern' world, where a human being from birth is trained to become an avid participant-spectator-consumer in the unjust economic and social order. That is to say, the task becomes complex when the very social measure of one's life lies in contradiction. A certain recoil from this man-made chaos becomes essential in order to be able to grasp again the threads of inwardness. Here the practice of *tyaga*, as explained below, is crucial, which is the second philosophical idea in which education ought to be grounded. The first mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* gives the strategy of '*tyaktena bhunjita*', which is read by some to imply limited

partaking of the world while renouncing it at the same time. That is to say, we receive into ourselves certain fruits of the world while maintaining a psychological distance, never giving the material and sensual more space and importance than is absolutely necessary to maintain life. An embodied being has material needs, but when these needs turn into wants, then chaos, suspicion, and war ensue. Needs can be identified and limited, whereas wants are manufactured cravings that have no basis other than indulgence.

The dividing line between genuine needs and psychological wants must be discovered by each individual who must then decide on her or his relation with the material world. To prevent the overstepping of need into the arena of endless want and its justification, a deep inquiry into the mode of association with worldly things and images is needed. It is only through such careful inquiry that a proper relationship with the material world can emerge and not by simply superimposing the idea of *tyaga* on existing relations. That would only result in hypocrisy and not wisdom. One must also guard against the narrow interpretation of *tyaga* as forsaking the world and embracing asceticism, although that is one of its extreme possibilities. This kind of interpretation, especially in Western texts, has resulted in shunning of one of the most useful notions in understanding object relations and the place of human beings amongst the things of the world. It is the task of education to work with this notion and make it operational in daily life, as well as lay out a rich conceptual platform that allows each to work out her or his praxis.

The practice of *tyaga* cannot be carried out in isolation. It is concomitant to the simultaneous grasp of other related philosophical ideas and practices that together form a whole. One such notion is *ahamkara*, 'self' or 'ego'. Worldly grasping organises itself around an empirical

ego which is the centre of want. It is therefore of prime importance to discover for oneself the nature of this ego or self. If the self is ontologically equivalent to the trees and the rocks there is obviously little we can do about it. However, if it is a different phenomenon than material objects then we must discover its nature and its relationship with things that lie on a different ontological plane. The relevant question is therefore who or what posits the 'I'? In other words, what is the inner process that makes the claim that I exist? For Descartes, the mere presence of thinking indicated self-presence. It is leap of faith not substantiated by reason. But in Indian philosophy no such leap of faith is required. Instead, the process of 'I' formation is put under careful scrutiny, not merely in theory but in individual practice.

Hence, the question arises: who is the educator, or what is it that is being educated? As remarked above, Western philosophy takes the self as given and works with this ontological assumption giving it unquestioned reality. Therefore education is provided to the 'I', fattening it and making it the central unit of social, cultural, and epistemological considerations. However, when this ontological assumption is absent, the nature of education changes dramatically. If there is no existential assumption about the central unit—the self—that is supposedly acquiring knowledge, then what is the function, purpose, process, and meaning of education? In other words, if education is not a laurel to be picked up by an unquestioned 'I' then who is the learner and what is the site of learning? We can see that in such a case, the very question of education becomes altered. It is the task of philosophy to discover the nature of this altered terrain and place the hypothetical or contingent self in relation to it.

Also, it can be seen that when we do this, the

tension between the self and society, the individual and the collective, about which so much has been written and debated in the West, disappears. It appears now as a false debate based on wrong categories and assumptions. Here a useful reference can be made to Nietzsche who pointed out that there were no actors, only action. Hence, educational theory will have to go ahead without implicitly or explicitly assuming an actor or thinker but a procession of thoughts. In order to be able to grasp the truth of this, we would need to investigate another philosophical notion, namely, *sankalpa*, will. If the self or ego, is discovered as a form of ideational superstition, then what happens to the will that seemingly directs human effort?

Questions about will, especially 'free will', dominate Western discussions of philosophy. However free will does not assume great importance in Indian philosophical thought. We see why that is the case in Ramanuja's writings:

Sarvesham eva chetananam chichhaktiyogah pravrittishaktiyogah ityadi sarvam pravrittinivritti-parikaram samanyena samvidhaya, tannirvahanaya tadadharo bhutva antah pravishya, anumantritaya cha niyamanam kurvan sheshitvena avasthitah paramatma. Etad ahita-shaktissan pravrittinivrittityadi svayam eva kurute; evam kurvanam ikshamanah paramatma udasina aste atah sarvam upapannam.

The supreme Being endows all sentient beings with the power of thought and power of action. Thus the general equipment needed for the performance as well as the non-performance of actions is furnished by him. Then in order to manage the situation, he becomes the support and basis of all, enters into all beings and governs from within by his approbation of acts of individual will. He abides as the fundamental 'śeṣin' of all, all the individuals being subsidiary to him. The individual, thus equipped with all the requisite powers and facilities, endowed

with the power of initiative, engages in actions and abstinence from action by his own spontaneity of will. The supreme Being, witnessing his activity, remains unconcerned. Thus the whole situation is intelligible.⁷

There is no free will other than the operation of divine wholeness which operates through all beings. The power to think and act cannot be evaluated other than by taking the sum total of all conscious beings and their actions. In other words, we cannot understand this in an isolated manner or in relation to particular beings. The problem of philosophy is therefore not whether organisms have free will or not, but to grasp the point of entry and departure of that divine will that moves in us and to discover its real purpose. This is philosophically the true pedagogic act.

The next philosophical notion derived from Indian philosophy that might be considered here in conjunction with the above is *samskara*, mental impressions and residues. Ideas similar to this occur in various Indian philosophical systems including *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, and *Nyaya-Vaisheshika*. Its central importance from the perspective of education is on account of the fact that without understanding the processes by which mental representation of outer reality takes place in us there is little hope of creating an adequate basis for learning about the world. Mental formations are not independent of our conditionings and

residual experiences that colour our perceptions. In a sense, the *samskaras* help organise our mental picture of the world. Nevertheless, conditionings have to be understood in order to go beyond the 'false' consciousness generated by residual affects, sense impressions, and receptor mechanisms. The entry into the unconditioned, which is the aim of doing traditional philosophy, necessitates an adequate understanding of the conditioned mind, its arising and subsidence. It is a process of slow and patient discovery that must be carried out by each being aspiring to be educated. One might even say that the entire effort of education is nothing

Acharya Ramanuja's Statue



other than to work free of all the conditionings that limit our ways of looking.

An associated idea is *dukkha*, or suffering. *Dukkha* must not be understood in opposition to happiness. All *chittavritti* or mental modifications, whether identified as pain or pleasure, ultimately lead to sorrow or suffering. It is not a selective category based on vulgar dichotomy. Philosophically one must locate the sources of suffering and eliminate them in order to lead the peaceful or non-contradictory life. The Gita says: '*Ye hi samsparsha-ja bhoga, dukkha yonaya eve te, adi-anta-vantah Kounteya, na teshu ramate budhah*'.⁸ Loosely translated it means, all sensory enjoyments also bring suffering in their wake, therefore the wise ones do not indulge in the impermanent. In other words, the fleeting nature of sensory experience always brings a sense of loss in its wake, and therefore suffering follows. In order to lead a life of non-contradiction, which we have said is a fundamental purpose of doing philosophy, one must understand thoroughly the nature of sorrow and suffering. When the consciousness has learnt not to bring fresh suffering upon itself, to that extent it is liberated.

Individually as well as socially, *dukkha* assumes immense importance. When we bring suffering upon ourselves through craving and intemperance, we also affect others in the process. Suffering spreads like ripples on the surface of a pond in ever larger circles. Social violence, the result of incorrect understanding of the impermanent, is a clear example of how disaffect spreads to larger and larger groups from a point of origin. The systematic production of poverty and destitution through the ignorance and greed of some is yet another example. Philosophy ought to educate people to view the coming-to-be and the ceasing-to-be of phenomena so that we become less

desperately attached to and dependent on phenomenal conditions.

Indian philosophy, in particular Buddhist philosophy, teaches us that freedom from the existential process called *dukkha* brings about compassion towards one's fellow beings. That is to say, phenomenal understanding and even a partial transcendence of phenomenal attachment bestows us with feelings of deep kindness towards others since we are no longer caught up in our own suffering and do not look upon others as our competitors or as enemy. Hence educationally, the concept of *karuna*, compassion must be studied well. Compassion here does not mean ordinary feelings of sympathy, empathy, pity, and the like. Rather, *karuna* is a transcendental state in which the fundamental opposition between self and the other, which is the main cause of conflict in the world, is diminished. Compassion is not a personal quality or individual attribute. In other words, *karuna* is not something you or I possess. It is a transpersonal phenomenon that comes about precisely when we are somewhat free of the claims of personhood. This releases the otherwise trapped non-individuated psychic energies for creating new relations on an unprecedented plane. Compassion thus introduces the all-important limiting principle in human action, a limit on self-centred action that is otherwise missing. The lack of an organic limit is responsible for much of the chaos in the human world. *Karuna* or compassion is the other side of fulfilment, and the person who comes upon it has fewer dependencies on the outer world and hence fewer reasons for committing violence upon others.

I will end by mentioning two more philosophical notions or practices available in Indian philosophy invaluable for education, namely, *svasthya*, health and *vyayama*, effort.

Right health and right effort are two prerequisites for Indian philosophical practice. *Svasthya* does not mean mere absence of disease, rather, it means self-dependence or a freedom from dependence on the material conditions of life. One who possesses *svasthya* is relatively free from bodily disruptions and so can focus on her or his chosen path. A detailed Ayurvedic code of conduct towards this end is called *Svasthya Vrutta*.

A regimen is recommended which, if followed will ensure that your life will remain healthy. In this *Svasthya Vrutta* due consideration is given to the person's age, individual constitution, the seasons. As an individual you try to maintain a positive physical health, mental health, your sensory motor health and your spiritual health. So health is a holistic concept and not thought of in compartments.

Like all other ancient Indian sciences Ayurveda has a spiritual aspect. In ayurvedic philosophy everything relates to soul. Spirit, soul or *atma* or consciousness is the purpose of your living. If that is not there you cease to be and if that is there, there is possibility of acquiring knowledge, enriching yourself and experiencing new senses.

The gist of Ayurveda philosophy is related to the soul or individual consciousness and the structural arrangement or the functional arrangement of the body revolves around that being inside. It's a very harmonious relationship taking into account individual constitution, effect of time, effect of age, diet and habits you have acquired over a period of time. This is how Ayurveda looks at life.⁹

Svasthya is a holistic concept-practice that attempts to bring awareness to every part of the body and the being, including the knowledge as to what is needed to keep the different centres of the body-mind complex working in harmony. The effort is to find and function according to a rhythm natural to the specific being and the

purpose is to reach the life divine which is the ultimate goal of human life.

Closely related to the above concept-practice in Indian philosophy is *vyayama*. The word comes from the root meaning 'to uncover' or 'to extricate'. Effort is needed to extricate one's true self or being from the distortions brought about by lack of awareness and training. The Gita says: 'As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dirt and as a foetus remains enclosed in the womb, so is this [our true nature] shrouded by that [desire].'¹⁰ Right effort, like right health, is an integral notion aimed at bringing about transformative changes in various nodes and centres of the body and the being. The unredeemed human consciousness is fragmentary and contradictory. It is the task of *vyayama* to create an adequate vehicle for transformation at the physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual levels. As for the constituents of *vyayama*, it depends verily on the *sadhaka* or seeker and her or his constitution. Each constitution will require a specific kind of *vyayama* for it to become a vehicle of truth. To give an example, some may require the discipline of *hatha yoga*, and to yet others such exertions may be superfluous. Their *prarabdha* or accumulated effects of the past actions may require of them a different kind of effort.

The concept-practices discussed above occur across the six major schools of Indian philosophy as well as in some of the associated literature, and each is rich with philosophical and pedagogic possibilities. Taken together these can form a broad conceptual framework for a living and transformative education within a vernacular tradition. There are no 'isms' or personae involved here which was one of the objections set out in the opening passage. And unlike John Dewey's famed rationale for education—'the continuity of social life'—which fails to say why there should be social continuity in the first

place, the above framework can give a comprehensive answer to the question of education in ethical, teleological, and axiological terms. Attainment of full humanity is a far more persuasive reason for education than social continuity. In the absence of the former, the latter can turn out to be, in Upanishadic language, merely a case of ‘*andhenaiva niyamana yathandhab*’ or the blind leading the blind.¹¹ Whereas the former is a lifelong exercise in becoming human, the latter is a puzzling urge for continuity.

There are infinitely many other resources in the Eastern philosophies for drawing out the living quality of education. For example, a similar effort as outlined above can be carried out using the concept-practices of the *Naqshbandiya* among the Sufis. The *tariqa-yi-khvajagan* or the way of the teachers involves educational practices such as *hush-dar-dam*, awareness-in-breathing, *nazar-bar-kadam*, watchfulness-in-movement, *khalwat-dar-anjuman*, solitude-in-crowd, *nigah dasht*, watching thoughts, and so on. These must not be brushed aside as esoteric practices relevant to a few. On the contrary, these practices attempt to reach that which is most intimate to the human, and work on its uncovering. Commonplace education leaves us foreigners to ourselves and hence everything other than the common curriculum appears as distant or esoteric. In actuality, these practices have a larger picture of human becoming and a bigger purpose in life than the economic or the political. The task of philosophy here is to open up the category called the human to a domain, both intimate and unknown, in which the being can attain fulfilment without contradicting anyone else’s claim to fulfilment.

On the above lines, I have endeavoured, as briefly as possible, to delineate specific tools and practices that require explicit philosophical foregrounding, attempted to show why these

are important and worth adopting, and demonstrated how such philosophical approaches might contribute towards a more holistic understanding of the educational project. This was my brief as I had outlined at the beginning of the essay. It is not my claim that these concept-practices by themselves can form a curriculum adequate for today’s world. Rather, it is my claim that these or others similar to these can and should form the background against which empirical knowledge can be located and made sense of. It is also my claim that it is only when such frameworks are adequately built that knowledge finds its proper place and does not become destructive. That is the true labour of philosophy.



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The Parable of the Paramahamsa

I S Madugula and Sudha Emany

The story of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face.¹

IF A PARABLE IS DEFINED as a simple story illustrating a moral, religious, or spiritual principle depicted in a symbolic or allegorical fashion, then Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life is a parable of the highest order. Swami Vivekananda had no doubt: 'To remove all this corruption in religion, the Lord has incarnated Himself on earth in the present age in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. The universal teachings that he offered, if spread all over the world, will do good to humanity and the world. Not for many a century past has India produced so great, so wonderful, a teacher of religious synthesis.'²

Religious and spiritual leaders of all ages have resorted to the use of parables to teach powerful lessons to ordinary people, each of the stories having both a superficial meaning and a deeper allegorical significance. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, for instance, tells the Mosaic Lawyer that the real meaning of a neighbour is one who shows compassion to a fellow human being, thus qualifying himself for the Kingdom of Heaven despite his lonely social status. On another level, Jesus Himself is the Samaritan, the robbed and stricken man is all of us struggling in our daily grind, and the Lawyer a genuine seeker who qualifies for the grace of the Lord, when all his knowledge of the 'law' is of no avail to him.³

Sri Ramakrishna was a treasure house of traditional spiritual tales with which he not only regaled his followers but used them to teach

poignant lessons in a simple and direct manner to them.

This article focuses on the life of the Paramahamsa itself as a marvellous story whose study provides us with all the clues we need to understand the 'meaning of life'. It is simple yet highly complex, each of his moods signifying a thousand truths. It might have looked ordinary to many people including some of his own disciples, but it is anything but ordinary. Each passing act or instruction of his was pregnant with spiritual significance to those who had the ability to understand him. In the words of Swamiji: 'You see, the fact is that Shri Ramakrishna is not exactly what the ordinary followers have comprehended him to be. He had infinite moods and phases. Even if you might form an idea of the limits of Brahmajnana, the knowledge of the Absolute, you could not have any idea of the unfathomable depths of his mind!'⁴ Through his myriad moods, he remained a child, not just 'Kali's child', but a child untainted by the world and its allure. He defined a *paramahamsa* as a child who 'doesn't keep any track of his whereabouts. He sees everything as Brahman. He is indifferent to his own movements.'⁵ He then quoted an apparently insane person who visited the temple at Dakshineswar: 'When you no longer make a distinction between the water of this Pool and the water of the Ganges, then you will know that you have Perfect Knowledge' (ibid.). Those who only saw him during his daily interactions with people going about their busy but empty—or worse—troubled lives never probably heard him

say: 'The worldly-minded practise devotions, japa, and austerity only by fits and starts. But those who know nothing else but God repeat His name with every breath. Some always repeat mentally, "Om Rama". Even the followers of the path of knowledge repeat "Soham", "I am He". There are others whose tongues are always moving, repeating the name of God. One should remember and think of God constantly' (493).⁶

We will now look at some of Sri Ramakrishna's favourite parables to explore how his own life events can be interpreted from the perspective of parables. There were these two farmers whose lands were parched owing to lack of rains. But there was an irrigation canal some distance away which could supply the necessary water if only they would dig the connecting channels. One of them was determined to do just that and vowed not to bathe or eat until he had accomplished his mission, despite pleas from his family to take a break. He went on and after backbreaking labour, got the life-giving water to his field. Then he went home, enjoyed his bath and dinner, and slept like a log. The other farmer also had the same choice and opportunity, but yielded to the importunities of his family to break for the day and rest up. His field continued to parch for at least one more day. Sri Ramakrishna pointed out that the first farmer was one with a strong renunciation and the second one had only a mild renunciation. We know that he himself used to sit in front of Kali completely absorbed in Brahman in the form of Kali for hours together without any knowledge of his body or its petty demands.⁷ Lukewarm devotion, then, would not do if one wants results. In Sri Ramakrishna's words: 'Why gradually? One should not practise that lukewarm devotion. One should have the burning faith in one's heart, realization must come just now, I will see Him this very moment. Can half-hearted devotion help one to realize Him?'⁸ One must have the same

devotion to God as the combined intensity of 'the child's attraction for the mother, the husband's attraction for the chaste wife, and the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man.'⁹

Sri Ramakrishna was often lost in *nirvikalpa* samadhi, merging in the universal consciousness. Describing the experience, he narrates the story of two sons of a learned brahmin who had just returned home after years of education under a great teacher. Wanting to test the quality and quantity of their learning, the brahmin first asked the older boy to describe Brahman. The boy recited recondite texts and 'described' Brahman abundantly.¹⁰ The younger boy's answer was utter silence. He was tongue-tied. He had no words to speak about the indefinable, unutterable, awesome nature of Brahman. The father then pointed out that anything that can be 'described' or talked about cannot be Brahman, by definition. The Paramahansa achieved through diligent self-effort what few could ever hope to achieve, the *nirvkalpa* samadhi.

A unique feature of Sri Ramakrishna is that he experienced God both as a form and as utterly without form as Brahman, pure Satchidananda. Most sages stick to one or the other principle when trying to realise God. And they do realize God. Non-dualists as well as modified non-dualists attain the same goal, regardless of how they describe that goal, inasmuch as they can describe that at all. To illustrate this point, Sri Ramakrishna used the well-known story of the elephant and the six blind men who tried to guess what the animal looked like,¹¹ each coming up with his own version based on what part of the animal he had touched: the elephant is like a pillar, a fan, a pot, and so on. He states: 'One can rightly speak of God only after one has seen Him. He who has seen God knows really and truly that God has form and that He is formless as well. He has many other aspects that cannot be described.'¹²

Sri Ramakrishna exhibited ample signs of his future greatness and renunciation right from the start. He intently listened to religious lore, followed the wandering monks who stopped at his village en route for Puri, observed their practices and meditations, defied meaningless social customs by eating the food cooked by his lower-caste nanny, thus shocking all the elders; and he was even able to identify himself with Shiva in his own consciousness while play-acting. Coming events do indeed cast their shadows.

In Dakshineswar, in the presence of the dreaded image of Kali, he was completely at home, feeling only her compassion and love, and wondering whether, in creating a diverse universe, both terror and tenderness were inextricably interwoven. The *jnana*, the knower, however transcends mere appearances and sees the Godhead for what it is. The *Gospel* notes that he was unlike the ordinary priests who regurgitate hymns and mantras mechanically with no clue to their inner meaning and import: 'But from the very beginning the inner meaning of these rites was revealed to Sri Ramakrishna. As he sat facing the image, a strange transformation came over his mind. While going through the prescribed ceremonies, he would actually find himself encircled by a wall protecting him and the place of worship from unspiritual vibrations, or he would feel the rising of the mystic Kundalini through the different centers of the body' (13).

And this despite 'his incompetence and his ignorance of the scriptures' (ibid.) for which his 'devotion and sincerity' (ibid.) more than made up in his employer's view. This was the formal beginning of his spiritual journey, culminating in his blessing of mankind on his own and through Swamiji. There is not a greater parable than his life that showed us all how a realised saint led his immortal life among mortals. His life was one long meditation in which, according to

him: 'The mind becomes like a continuous flow of oil—it thinks of one object only, and that is God. It is not aware of anything else' (850).

Perhaps the greatest transformation in him—one that lasted his entire life—occurred right after his marriage or rather engagement in modern terminology, after his return to Dakshineswar. He returned with his inner spiritual fire crackling ever brighter and fiercer. His meditations intensified to the point that he ignored his body first and then forgot about it totally. Birds would peck his long unkempt hair. The elements would change from bad to worse. Nothing mattered to the self-absorbed god-intoxicated young man who was lost in a totally exalted state of consciousness. Holding a coin in one hand and a clod in the other, he would instantly realise the equal uselessness of both, literally proving the validity of the words of the Bhagavadgita: 'to whom a lump of earth, iron, and gold are the same.'¹³

Women were the incarnations of the Divine Mother to him, and that included his wife. There were no untouchables, no pariahs. About a streetwalker Ramani, he wondered aloud: 'Mother, I see that Thou art in that form too!'¹⁴

He had visions galore of the kind that no psychiatrist could ever hope to analyse, in which he traversed faraway worlds and distant climes, seeing none but the Lord wherever he landed, proving of course, that the universe dwells within the jiva inasmuch as it exists at all.


This personal experience later empowered him to declare that in the case of an advanced devotee, the mind itself becomes the guru, living and moving like an embodied being. Herein lies the clue to his stature as a *jivanmukta*. He was a born *bhakta* and a born *jnani*.

The amazing thing about Sri Ramakrishna, to our minds, is how he outwardly behaved both as an eternal child and as an ordinary man taking part in all worldly activities. He had his

tastes in food and clothing, which he publicly indulged in. He advised followers of all levels, all persuasions, and in all stages of life. He never discriminated against householders, only gently indicating the importance of devotion and meditation to them. With more advanced disciples like Narendra, he might have been sterner to accelerate their progress because he wanted them to realise their full potential here and now. So what do we make of his life and teachings? The answer: no matter how one characterises him, one would be only partly right, except if one called him a *paramahansa*. To whom else would Kali clarify at the very end of one's life that *all* is Brahman? When he complained to her that his cancerous throat wouldn't allow him even to eat a morsel, she admonished him: 'What? You are eating enough through all these mouths. Isn't that so?' (69). The *paramahansa* notes with utter humility: 'I was ashamed and could not utter another word' (69–70.).

The apparent duality of Sri Ramakrishna's personality persisted till the very end. Alone with him, Narendra silently doubted his master for one last time. Was he really a god as everyone seemed to think? Sensing this thought on the part of his premier disciple, he smiled upon him with utmost indulgence and affection, and to Narendra's utter embarrassment, 'distinctly said, "He who was Rama and Krishna is now, in this body, Ramakrishna—but not in your Vedantic sense"' (72).

In the Vedantic sense of course, there is only one truth known as Brahman, Reality, pure Consciousness or, because there cannot really be a name for it, That: 'The Reality is one. People give It various names. Take the case of a lake with four landing-ghats on its four banks. People who draw water at one ghat call it "jal", and those who draw it at the second ghat call it "pani". At the third ghat they call it "water", and at the fourth, "aqua". But it is one and the same thing: water' (1024).

The life of Sri Ramakrishna is full of lessons for us. His practice of all major faiths to varying degrees and his unwavering conviction of their equality in reaching the goal of self-realisation serve a tremendous purpose today in a world deeply divided by religious dogma. The parables he narrated, in essence, are time and again illustrated by his own life, thus making his life itself a parable, a living allegory. Precept and practice simply coalesced in his saintly person. 

References

1. Mahatma Gandhi in his foreword to Swami Nikhilananda, *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), ix.
2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 6.465.
3. See Luke 10:25–37.
4. *Complete Works*, 6.479.
5. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 491.
6. Also see the *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.1: 'Avrittir asakrit upadeshat, repetition is necessary, since the Upanishads instruct repeatedly' and *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.12: 'Aprayanat tatrapī hi drishtam, [meditation is to be repeated] up till the moment of death, for it is noticed in the scriptures that it is done so even then.'
7. See *Gospel*, 166. Also see Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.21–2: 'Tivra samveganam asannah, success is speedy for the extremely energetic'; 'Mridumadhyadhimatratvat tato'pi visheshah, the success of Yogis differs according as the means they adopt are mild, medium, or intense.'
8. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2008), 472. Also see: 'He practised each of the five spiritual loving moods and in each one of them he became absolutely merged in the Object of his love and absolutely forgetting his own existence, realized the non-dual Reality' (308).
9. *Gospel*, 244. Also see Acharya Shankara, *Shivandalahari*, 61. Shankara says that true bhakti is comparable to the relationship between the tree and its seed, the magnet and iron filings,

a chaste wife and her husband, the vine and its support, and the river and the ocean.

10. See Acharya Shankara, *Aparokshanubhuti*, 133: 'Those who talk endlessly about Brahman but are totally grounded in the world will continue to be born and reborn.'
11. Of Indian origin, this story has been versified by the nineteenth-century American poet, John Godfrey Saxe, to make precisely the same point: 'So, oft in theologic wars/The disputants,

I ween/Rail on in utter ignorance/Of what each other mean/And prate about an Elephant/Not one of them has seen!' (John Godfrey Saxe, *The Blind Men and the Elephant*). Just about every major religion in the world has picked up this story since then with an interpretation to suit its own teachings.

12. *Gospel*, 191.
13. *Gita*, 14.24.
14. *Gospel*, 577.



Swami Vivekananda's Ontological Ethics

Dilipkumar Mohanta

BEFORE DISCUSSING Swami Vivekananda's ontological ethics, I propose to give a rough idea about the concept of value, because it is important for any discussion on moral philosophy.¹ Every culture, Eastern or Western, gives special emphasis on certain values. What is a value then? Wittgenstein thinks it to be a 'terrible business' to define value. It is, so to say, a hopelessly 'ambiguous job'. But everybody admits that a 'valueless life' is a valueless life. Every day we are confronted with different kinds of problems such as existential, economic, social and political, moral, psychological, and so on.

Today we are in need of a philosophy which can address the problems we face or confront with. And it is said that unless there is the binding of values, our life would be meaningless and full of chaos. Values are roughly considered as ideals that one should try to follow in life. We cannot deny that there are both material and spiritual aspects of our life. Suppose a person is suffering and I give him relief. Here my act is prompted by value. It has social value. If I do such a thing out of humility and reverence, with no sense of self-glorification, vanity, and egotism, my act becomes pure and purity is the nature of a spiritual act. Such an action is called *seva*, service in a stipulated sense. By service to others one is being spiritually elevated, because service to others is the service to God, according to Swamiji. This spiritual attitude is the basis of social value. It purifies the moral dimensions of action. Purity is the essence of spiritual value. It is called pure, because it is being done expecting nothing in

return; rather it is being done out of a sense of sacrifice for others, as a sense of duty to others.

The 'other' is essentially 'I'. It refers to our very existence and through it ordinary morality is being transcended. Morality pertains to progress when spirituality pertains to perfection. A holistic account of life cannot ignore the comprehensive hierarchy of values. Morality is necessary for entering into the realm of spirituality just as an aerodrome is necessary for an aeroplane in order to take off, but the act of flying by the aeroplane can take place only by transcending the aerodrome. So morality and spirituality are interconnected. The former is necessary for the latter and the latter can only be achieved by transcending the former. But how are these related to a meaningful life? Even if we urge someone to be moral in the very ordinary sense the question arises: why should one be so? It is an ontological question. Without any ontological foundation neither morality nor spirituality can be explained. Swamiji tries to explain these twin principles of our life in the light of 'one-many essential identity thesis' of Vedantic ontology.

Swamiji has a special understanding of morality in this direction. For him, morality must have an ontological foundation. The Upanishadic dictum of 'I is essentially Thou' can serve as the ontological foundation for being moral. When he says that a human being is potentially divine, what does he mean? He, by these words, means that the three ideas of Atman, Brahman, and ignorance are contained in one. That is why, in addition to conventional moral qualities, Swamiji emphasised 'purity' as an indispensable ground

for our moral conduct. All religions speak of certain conventions as codes to be followed by the respective followers or believers. But all religions agree that purity is the basis of spirituality and it is depicted as a kind of 'freedom from desires and instinctual drives. Morality is how we appear to others; purity is what we actually are.'² In the following paragraphs I shall try to give an exposition of Swamiji's ontological ethics and morality.

Ethics is also called morality. Morality indeed centers mainly around the practice of several virtues or good qualities in one's behaviour. It is basically character-centred. This may be considered as the constituents of what is called 'virtue ethics'. When a person's action or behaviour is the sole criterion of judging whether one is moral or not, it is called 'action ethics'. So ethics, broadly speaking, deals with the principles and philosophical theories of standards on the basis of which the moral behaviour or action of an individual is being judged. In the history of Western ethics, Immanuel Kant propounded an ethics of duty. It is action-oriented and it is called categorical imperative as different from hypothetical imperative. What is duty is unconditional. Duty is to be done for duty's sake. For this sometimes Kant is known as an act-deontologist. According to act-deontologists, individual's action should be the criterion of morality. Whether a person is morally justified or not is to be judged by the action one does. But what is the source of action? There are two dominant views. According to 'de-ontologism', one's sense of duty is the primary cause for doing good action. In Indian philosophy, roughly speaking, the Mimamsa philosophers subscribe to de-ontologism—though there are differences between the two.

In Western philosophy, Kant's view is often known as the deontological view. The teleological view of morality is also another major theory. In Western philosophy, the view of utilitarians like Bentham and Mill, and in Indian philosophy,

the Naiyayikas roughly subscribe to teleological theory of moral action. None of these theories could satisfy Swamiji. Astonishingly enough, we see that Swamiji has not also been satisfied with the so-called popular view of morality where it is proposed to determine only on the basis of one's character. It is indeed true that a person's character is important for determining the goodness or badness of one's action, but this cannot be the sole criterion. The question still remains unanswered: Why should one be virtuous? An ethical theory which rests merely on virtues to be followed mechanically in and through one's conduct cannot answer the question just raised. What is moral must also be rational although vice-versa is not true. Unless you are fearless and you are conditioned by some other things how can you be free? And unless you are free to act, how can you be made responsible for your action? But, how to realise one's freedom? So the special question of ontology cannot be ignored in dealing with matters called ethical or moral. The sense of categorical imperative is too strong an appeal to be followed in practice by common people. On the other hand, the view that 'some teleological aspiration can make people act morally' is also not a satisfactory theory, because it is not a general truth that only for some goal, say to get happiness, we act morally.

So the question we raised still remains unanswered: Why should we be morally good? Major religions of the world also deal with such a question. According to some religion, this is the command of God and if we do not obey this command, God will punish us. Here the ground for being moral is fear, like the fear of police in 'not committing' a criminal offence. It is indeed true that in the ordinary world, it is because of society and state power or policing that a kind of popular morality works. But fear and command cannot constitute the ground for the true sense of morality. In China Mencius or Menju, a philosopher

of Confucianism in the third century BCE, raised a similar question as Swamiji raised: 'Why should we be morally good'? According to Mencius, we should be good, because our real nature is good. We are *intrinsically good*, to put it in other words. When we do something morally wrong, we, in fact, *fall from our intrinsic nature*. But what is our true nature then? Unfortunately Mencius has not elaborated his answer.³ But we can find a similar answer in Swamiji with an additional affirmation of what is our true nature. He says that ethics rests on intrinsic purity and goodness of the self. According to Swamiji, a person does good because of being basically good.

One's doing good is not due to any external condition like fear or command. It has a more profound ontological basis that rests on the essential oneness of Atman. Swami Bhajananda, in one of his lectures delivered in Calcutta University's Philosophy Department, called it 'Ontological Ethics'. The ontological foundation of this ethics is the Vedantic non-dualism which has application in the phenomenal world, the world of our experience. According to Acharya Shankara, there are two ways—the enquiry about *dharma*, duty and the enquiry about Brahman, the ultimate reality, and they are separate. But Swamiji tries to show the link and harmony between the two. So good and bad are not categorically opposite to each other in Swamiji's understanding. Vedanta in Swamiji's understanding does not admit 'sin' but does admit 'superimposition', error. It does not ignore the apparently contradictory nature of the phenomenal world, that is to say, the exact nature of the world cannot be described with absolute certainty with a categorical 'yes' or 'no'. We cannot say that a worldly thing has categorical existence or non-existence. Instead of admitting mutually contradictory explanations, Vedanta only admits the indispensable nature of worldly things. Swamiji emphasises the positive side of our

life; he has put the ontological values embedded in the Vedantic tradition of Indian culture *into practice*. How to face evil is the main question? It is fearlessness that is required. Purity, goodness, and fearlessness—all have their origin in the self which is identical with the absolute Self. The expression of this unity is called love and compassion and this is the ontological foundation of our ethics. This is expressed as the great dictum, 'You are That'. The reality is love as such. It is beautifully explained in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: 'It is not for the sake of the husband, my dear, that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the wife, my dear, that she is loved, but for one's own sake that she is loved. ... these beings and these all—are this Self.'⁴

Swamiji explains this passage to mean that all beings become loving because the ultimate reality, the absolute Self exists in all. There is no difference of colour, religion, gender, or caste. Everything merges with the Atman in realisation. The 'I-Other' relationship should be reshaped *not* as mutually exclusive but as *complementary in the macro-level* and *essentially identical in the micro-level*. But this high and lofty ontological ethics has no meaning if we do not practise it. And if we do not admit such an ontological basis of our actions, we cannot have any explanation for our good actions. In other words, only by doing good can we be good, and also as we are intrinsically good, we can overcome the superimposition of selfishness in our nature and realise our freedom. Freedom is the realisation of one's own nature. It is a philosophy of universal and unconditional love and Swamiji, like Buddha, has practised it. To love a human being is to love God. There is no room for fear and hatred there. Superimposition of ego upon our true nature makes us think that we are different from the ultimate reality. It also separates us from our essential identity with others and makes us 'selfish'. This knowledge of the difference

of 'I and mine' is the root cause of all our sufferings. This selfishness makes us immoral. What is devoid of selfishness is moral and what is associated with selfishness is immoral. This is Swamiji's notion of ethics, which rests on his notion of the human being and ontology of the human being rests on the thesis of identity of individual self and the absolute Self. This is also the ontological ground of Swamiji's philosophy of action.

Swamiji's philosophy of action has two important aspects: social uplift and spiritual elevation. The ideal of bodhisattva inspired him more than the ideal of *arhat* of Buddhism, universal care ethics of Lord Buddha. According to him, we can realise our own good by doing good to others. The 'other' is not opposite to me, but as good as me. In this sense when I speak of the 'other', I speak 'with' the other and not 'about' the other in a macro-level discourse. We can have a spiritual journey from the lower self to the higher self by serving others, from the unripe ego to the ripe ego. In the former case there is an inherent concept of tolerance, but in the latter it is the fact of acceptance. The notion of tolerance contains a sense of difference and superiority. I tolerate you, because I am great. I could punish you, but because of my superiority and greatness I do not punish you. This is the sense expressed in the ordinary and non-stipulated use of the term tolerance. But the fact of acceptance expresses the essential identity, a sense of love and the so-called difference in the 'other' is only a superimposition. So, by serving the other one can realise one's oneness with the other and this helps one to abandon the sense of ego gradually. Thus, serving others, the person who is serving thus, is actually being served. It is renunciation and service.

Service to others, as worshipping God, illumines one's selfish ego and elevates oneself. This transition from the unripe ego to the ripe ego, instead of depicting the ego as fictitious or illusory in every

possible sense, philosophically enriches us in providing room for 'all efforts at self-improvement and development, development of personality, striving for success'.⁵ Therefore, here the ontology of self as universal is the basis of the philosophy of action which teaches to work without any selfish care for the consequences. It is not teleological in the usual sense. According to Swamiji, the work in the spirit of service is both *necessary and sufficient condition* for self-realisation. Swamiji says: 'That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.'⁶ He says: 'Love, truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power' (1.32). Love represents the reality's expression in positive terms. It is only when our wrong understanding of reality as ego is negated, that the reality as Self reveals itself as 'a unitary principle dwelling in all beings; its cosmic dimension is known as Brahman. It is this unity of Self that is the basis of all love.'⁷ According to Swamiji: 'Ethics is unity; its basis is love.'⁸ This ontological oneness is expressed in action in the phenomenal world through values called spiritual values like love and sympathy, and this essential oneness is the foundation of ethics and morality. This is also the moral dimension of and 'is summed up in the Vedanta philosophy by the celebrated aphorism, *Tat Tvam Asi*, "Thou art That"' (1.389).

Now in connection with what has been said above, a pertinent question may arise here: Does this conception of morality based on the ontology of essential oneness make our religious and secular life meaningless? Here morality is conceived not as an end in itself. If it is a means, then it is for what? Is it not a case of denial that in religious and secular life moral action is resorted to? It is indeed true that we are to follow certain rules and regulations as obligatory both in religious and secular life. But morality based on ontology of essential identity of all is no bar for this; only it strengthens

its holding to a higher end, that is to say, in the 'transcendental experience of the ultimate reality'. Its practical aspect is called self-discipline. It rests on the spiritual values of 'transpersonal humanism' or to cite a phrase from Sir Brajendranath Seal, 'cosmic humanism'. It was Swamiji who for the first time connected the Vedantic ontological thesis of essential identity as the foundation for our moral consciousness with social service through his conception of practical Vedanta. A good life cannot be cherished without the use of logic and ethics and these two constitute the core of philosophy as conceived in ancient India.

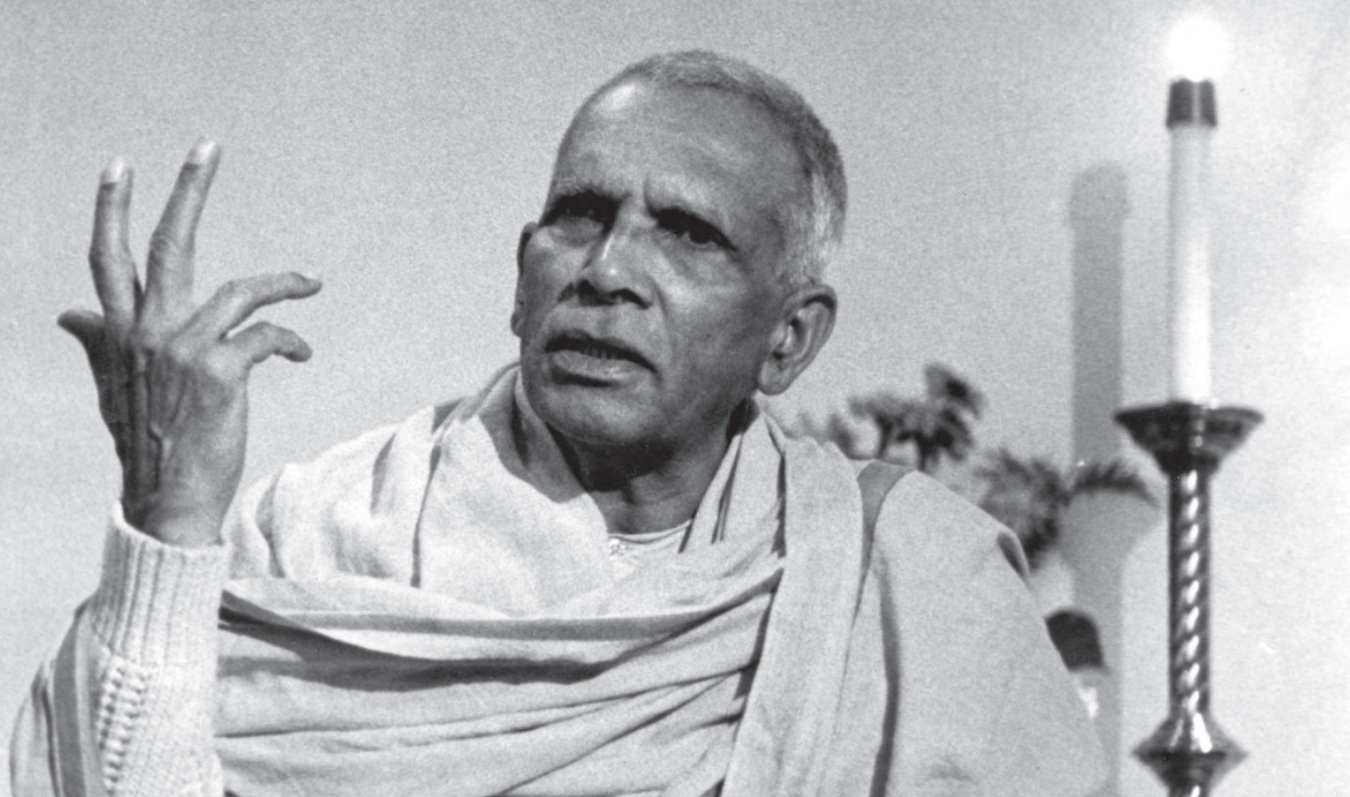
In India, philosophy is known as the lamplight, the methodology for understanding a problem either of science or of humanities. Philosophical grounding makes a person rational and ethical. We can become just by doing just acts. A moral act must be rational too. But whatever is rational may not be moral. Unless we are engaged in selfless service without being interested in its consequences for ourselves, that work will bind us. But if it is done with the spirit of service to others, it is moral and it has spiritual value. Service of others, even of unknown guests, is considered as good as the service to God in the Indian cultural tradition. Without the sense of value, both individual and community lives would become meaningless.

Conventional morality, which ordinarily people follow out of fear—fear of God, police, society, or even the fruits of one's actions—does not have much appeal in the modern world. Perhaps this fact prompted Swamiji to rely on the intrinsic purity and divinity of the Self as the basis of moral action. Immorality, for him, is nothing but a 'fall from the actual nature of human being'. He considers work as worship and believes that through selfless work alone can we realise our divine nature. He says: 'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die' (2.84). He

also says: 'That society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical. ... and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better' (2.85) For Swamiji, non-dualism of the Atman is the ontological foundation of morality. When I hate the other, I hate myself; when I do violence against the other, I do violence to myself because the so-called 'other' is essentially myself. It is because of the realisation of the essential binding of oneness that we act morally. It is only when we fall from our essential nature due to ignorance that we harm others and become immoral. Swamiji shows the ideal: 'Renunciation is the very basis upon which ethics stands. There never was an ethical code preached which had not renunciation for its basis. ... Perfect self-annihilation is the ideal of ethics' (2.62–3). ❧

Notes and References

1. The main idea contained in this paper is inspired from the Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Endowment Lecture titled 'Swami Vivekananda's Philosophical Concepts: Integral Vedanta and Practical Vedanta' delivered by Swami Bhajananda, Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, at the Department of Philosophy, University of Calcutta in March 2011. I am grateful to him for some clarifications sought during discussion.
2. Swami Bhajananda, 'Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna', *Journal of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Calcutta*, 9/10 (2009), 51.
3. See Phillip Ho Hwang, 'What is Mencius' Theory of Human Nature', *Philosophy East and West*, 29/2 (April 1979), 201–9.
4. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5, 4.5.6.
5. 'Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna', 46.
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Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

IN DREAM ALSO you see so many experiences. 'The dreamer associating himself (with the dream conditions) experiences those (objects), even as the one, well-instructed here (goes from one place to another and sees objects belonging to those places).'⁴¹ You go from here to Buffalo, to Niagara, many places. You are seeing, experiencing many things. The same thing we do in dream. He says:

Objects that are cognized in the waking state are not seen in dream. ... What then are they (dream experiences)? ... A man perceives in dream objects which are never usually seen in the waking state. He finds himself (in dream)

to be with eight hands and seated on an elephant with four tusks. Similarly various other unusual (abnormal) objects are seen in the dream. These (dream objects) are not like other illusory objects. They are, without doubt, real (in themselves). Therefore the illustration does not agree. Hence, the statement that the waking experiences are unreal like those of dream is not correct (95).

That is the objection. 'Reply: No, your conclusion is not correct. You think that the objects perceived in dream are extraordinary (not like those usually seen in the waking state), but these are not absolutely real in themselves. What,

then, is their nature? They are only peculiar to the circumstances of the perceiver associated with those (dream) conditions' (ibid.).

For him they are perfectly in a natural state. That is the condition. As in people seeing in heaven and the experiences they get. 'The dream experiences have no causal relation with the waking experience. A causal relation between two objects of even waking experiences, as will be seen later on, cannot be proved to be true' (96). Even in the waking state, causality is not true. That is the meaning of indeterminacy. In the mass, causality is true. In the micro, it is not true. That is the language.

The objects of our experiences, whether in dream or waking state, are but the creations of the mind (*chittaspandanam*) and it is due to ignorance that we relate them causally. In dream, the mind is associated with those experiences which are realised as creations of dream. ... both of dream and waking experiences are alike in nature. But a line of demarcation is sought to be drawn between them, contending that the dream percepts being most of them queer, fantastic and even unnatural, the like of them do not find a place in the world of the wakeful man. But such percepts, however grotesque or abnormal, appear perfectly normal, to the dreamer. [That is his judgment.] The dreamer evidently has his own notion of space, distance and form. But his standards have no applicability to the wakeful man. And the notions of the latter in regard to space etc., have no place in the dreamer's mind, though for each everything is normal and real (96-7).

That is the study: waking is normal to the waking; dream is normal to the dreamer. That is the study. From this we must come to the truth of what is really the changeless and what is the true nature of man. That will come later.

'In dream, also, what is imagined within by the mind is illusory and what is cognized outside

(by the mind) appears to be real' (97). Don't you see the distinction in dream also? Your inner thoughts are all unreal; the world outside is real. That means the distinction between the subjective and the objective obtains even in dream. And the dreamer says: 'The objective what I see is real. This is not real.' That is the way in which judgement comes in dream. 'Similarly, in the waking state, also, what is imagined within by the mind is illusory; and what is experienced outside (by the mind) appears to be real. But in fact, both should be rationally held to be unreal' (ibid.). Unreality, as we said earlier, is constant change subject to disappearance and death, such things—they are constantly changing. It is in search of the real that we say this is unreal. If this is unreal, then something is real. We don't really end saying this is unreal, no. This is unreal and we are in search for the real. This will satisfy our requirement. Like we say God is real, the world changes. Every religion will say God is real. The world is real only because God made it real. By itself it cannot be real. No religion will say that by itself the world is real. It is real in and through God. Internal things are illusory and external things are real in dream also.

'If the objects cognized in both the conditions (of dream and of waking) be illusory, [now comes the next question] who cognizes all these (illusory objects) and who again imagines them?' (98). Who is that? Who is the observer? The searchlight is turned to the real observer. If that also is illusory we will reject it. Philosophy is not going to take that as real. Let us see if it can stand the test. So who is the observer? Today science is slowly turning to the observer. The torchlight is being turned to the observer. The policeman goes on his beat at night in the village, with a lantern in his hand, Sri Ramakrishna said. Wherever some disturbance is there, he throws the light. He finds out that there is a thief going here and there. So it

falls on you. You don't know who is throwing this light. In that light you can see yourself, you can see others also. But who is throwing this light? You can't see the man. So he has to ask: 'Will you please throw the light on yourself so that I may see who you are?' This is a wonderful example given there. He must throw the light on himself; then you know, oh, you are a policeman who is calling. Like that, that knowledge will come.

'*Ubhayorapi vaitathyam bhedanam sthanyoradi, ka etanbuddhyate bhedan ko vai tesham vikalpakah*' (ibid.). Who is the one who sees all these? *Ko vai tesham vikalpakah*, who is imagining all these? Whose imagination is this?

'The opponent asks, 'If the objects, cognized in the waking and dream states, be devoid of reality, who is the cognizer of these—objects imagined by the mind ... Who is, again, their imaginer? In short, what is the support (substratum) of memory and knowledge? (98–9). That is a beautiful thing: support of memory and knowledge. It is the knower, the observer, the self, the subject, which was neglected till now in physics. Only the object we studied. But when you study deeply the object, the subject becomes involved. The world is not entirely apart from us. It is what we select, abstract, or create—these are the words used in that scientific passage. 'If you say none [like this], then we shall be led to the conclusion that there is nothing like *Ātman* or Self' (99). We are prepared to accept it provided the investigation reveals it. But let us investigate it. This is unreal; let us see if there is anything real. If there is nothing, we will see that the world is a zero. There is no harm—nihilistic ideas. Vedanta is not afraid if nihilism is going to be the end of enquiry; we shall have it. That boldness is there.

All the categories of experience, what are they? Knower, known, and knowledge—three categories. Subject, object, and knowledge—these

three 'become mere illusion. That is the same as believing in absolute nihilism in which the existence of even *Ātman* or Self is denied. But this contention is invalid. One cannot deny the existence of *Ātman*' (ibid.). That we will come to later.

The next shloka says: '*Ātman*, the self-luminous' (ibid.). It is of the nature of consciousness and consciousness is self-luminous, like any light. A thing is light because it illumines itself and it illumines others. That is the nature of light. And this is the light of consciousness. 'Through the power of his own *Māyā*, imagines in himself by himself (all the objects that the subject experiences within or without). He alone is the cognizer of the objects (so created). That is the decision of the Vedānta' (ibid.). It just gives the decision here, in this particular verse.

'*Kalpayaty-atmana'atmanam atma devah svamayaya, sa eva budhyate bhedaniti vedanta-nishchayah*' (ibid.). *Nishchaya* means determination. This is the determination of Vedanta. 'The self-luminous *Ātman* himself, by his own *Māyā*, imagines in himself the different objects, to be described hereafter' (ibid.). That is why we don't have a creator in Vedanta. There is no creator. The Atman projects himself as the subject, as the object; is the subject in the waking state; is also the object in the waking state. He is the subject in the dream. He is the object in the dream. He withdraws everything in sleep. He alone is. No god sitting here or there—nothing comes here. That is the Atman. 'He himself cognizes them, as he has imagined them. There is no other substratum of knowledge and memory' (ibid.). The self is the substratum of knowledge and memory. 'The aim of Vedanta is to declare that knowledge and memory are not without support as the Buddhistic nihilists maintain' (ibid.).

There is no extra-cosmic creator in Vedanta. 'The Lord (*Ātman*), with his mind turned outward'—just the Atman, consciousness, pure

consciousness, just outward—‘variously imagines the diverse objects (such as sound etc.), which are already in his mind (in the form of *Vāsanās* or *Sanikalpas* or desires). The *Ātman* again (with his mind turned within), imagines in his mind various (objects of) ideas’ (101). There again you get the external and the internal.

Vikaroti means creates or imagines. When you say even from the physical point of view, from that little background material, it exploded and all the starry systems came, life came, everything came. All came from that only, not from something else. Only that is what you call the *Ātman*. That is all the difference. An astronomer will say a material ball of fire exploded and became the universe, including your life, including your poetry, your art—everything; from that little physical explosion. We say that is the Lord himself. That is God, infinite *Ātman*, pure consciousness. And at the back of your consciousness is the *Ātman*, Self—in you, in me, in all. *Prabhu* in the text means the Lord. The external and internal comes all in relation to the body. The body has the organs of perception. Look out—objects. Look in—subjective. These distinctions are purely related to the body as the base and in our philosophy we say that cosmic evolution diverges into two. One became the subjective elements like the sensory system, objective elements—sensory objects. The same matter according to Sankhya becomes finer and becomes the sense organs; grosser and becomes the sense objects. Therefore this can cognise that. That is the Sankhya philosophy. Purely materialistic interpretation you find in Sankhya. And the *Ātman* is the mere cogniser, the witness. Nature evolves in these two dimensions. Subtle nature becomes the sensory system; gross nature becomes the sensory objects. That is how they will say it.

‘The world that is seen extended in time and space, with its permanent and impermanent

objects as well as the various ideas which are distinguished from matter, are all nothing but the ideas in the mind of the Creator’ (102). In God, this world is only an idea. That is the language. Just like in the sun, everything is only hydrogen atom. But here all sorts of differences are there. Concretions come, hard objects—everything is there. But, in the sun it is all purely hydrogen. Physically speaking, see the difference between the two.

‘The word “Imagination” is equivalent of “*Kalpāna*” [in Sanskrit]. The English term is generally used to denote the mental construction of the individual soul and the self. The Sanskrit term applies to both *Īśvara* (the *Ātman*) and the individual soul. ... Those that are cognized within only as long as the thought of them lasts’ (ibid.).

Whatever you think inside, its existence is only till the thought exists—thought goes, it also goes. *Chittakala*, they call it—their time span is the time span of the mental modification. In memory also, it is there, existing in that form. And you bring it out for a second, it is there, then it goes away. They are all passing thoughts. Just like waves passing on the surface of the lake—you can see so many waves. Just like that. Mind is like that.

The good thoughts and the bad thoughts—all are the effects of karma. Whatever work you do that creates an impression on the mind as it creates an impression on the external world also. There also there is a creation of impression. But this is what makes my character. These impressions that I make on my mind by my actions is the totality of my character.

The influence of the bad karmas depends upon the strength that we have gained. If the body is healthy no microbes can attack it. Similarly these external karmas cannot attack the mind, because it is healthy and strong. If it is weak, they all come in. This is the power of the mind. It is a relative thing, some minds are weak, and so they invite all these bad influences just

like bodies. Some bodies are weak and invite all the diseases within. If they are strong, it is called the resistance, power of resistance physical, resistance mental. If the element of good is strong in you, then you can resist all external invasions.

‘Those that are perceived by the senses and that conform to two points of time’ (ibid.). In the world of objects you have things existing in two points of time, ‘are all mere imaginations’ (ibid.). That which exists at one point of time, and that which exists at two points of time—both are imaginations. ‘There is no other ground for differentiating the one from the other. ... everything is mere imagination of the mind like the dream. For, the imagination of mind, such as desire etc., determined by mind, is different from objects perceived to exist outside, on account of the latter being determined by two points of time’ (ibid.).

This is a very subtle way of telling. This is one point of time, that is two points of time. You see and then you experience it. Then it passes away. Here rises and goes automatically in the inner world. In the outer world there is a little longer time, we call it for two points in time. How many particles are coming out with less point of time and more point of time—so many particles are there in particle physics and this external world. That is existing for a long time we say, but actually it is changing, in its constituent parts—outwardly they look just the same. Like that, the human body looks just the same but every day it is changing. Every day it is changing—within every seven years, nothing of the old body remains. Isn’t it so? Nothing of the old body remains and yet you treat it as one. That is called delusion. In the last chapter it will be said: ‘Take a torch; you see it as single. Start moving. It is one point there, one point there, one point there—moving very fast, it looks like a circle, a continuous circle of fire.’ Actually it is all discrete. But it appears to be a continuous circle of fire. That is mere illusory vision.

The last chapter is entitled ‘The Torch Turned Quickly Round.’ That is the title of the last chapter. To silence the fire, you realize the truth that this is a purely momentary moment going on. Because that quick movement, you find it as one single thing. Actually it is not. Very interesting it is. When girls jump over a rope, they jump and jump, you can do it so fast as if it is always going on. Actually there is always a time lag. Otherwise the first and second cannot be coordinated together. So the quick movements make for reality—that is the meaning. Slow movements make for unreality.

‘Objects perceived to exist within, only as long as the thought about them lasts, signify those (subjective) ideas which are only determined by mind; i.e., such objects have no other time to determine them except that wherein the idea in the mind exists’ (ibid.). It comes and goes. Whenever you see bubbles, it is a wonderful sight to see. Just as when soda is poured into the glass, so many bubbles come up. Comes up and then it goes. Then two bubbles join together and then goes, so one second, two seconds, and goes. And Shankaracharya uses this very example, like bubbles on water constantly rising and falling and then going away. That is why it is unreal; if you observe, if you don’t observe then everything is real. Bubbles are all real—you can say like that. *Budbuda*, bubble is called *budbuda* in Sanskrit. Just merges into one, doesn’t get destroyed; it goes into one. That is exactly the description of the particle coming from the field in quantum physics. It comes and then goes away. If you go deep into matter, this is what is happening.

‘The meaning is that such (subjective) ideas are experienced at the time when they are imagined’ (ibid.). Just that time only they exist. You imagine, they are. The imagination changes and they go.

Objects related to two points of time signify those external objects which are cognizable by others at some other point of time and which cognize the latter in their turn. Therefore such objects are said to be mutually limited by one another. As for example, when it is said that he remains till the cow is milked, the statement means, 'The cow is milked as long as he remains and he remains as long as the cow is milked.' [You relate two events together.] A similar instance is the following: 'It is like that, that is like this.' In this way, the objects perceived to exist outside mutually determine one another. Therefore they are known as '*Dvayakālāḥ*', that is related to two points in time. Ideas perceived within and existing as long as the mind that cognizes them lasts, as well as the external objects related to two points in time, are all mere imaginations. [They are mental modifications.] The peculiar characteristic of being related to two points in time of the objects that are perceived to exist outside is not due to any other cause except their being imagined by the mind. Therefore the illustration of dream applies well here (102–3).

There, cow is milking and you are remaining there. 'The cow may be milked independently of a man's existence and a man may exist independently of the milking of the cow. Those objects that are in this manner mutually cognized are said to answer to two points in time' (104).

A man remains as long as the cow is being milked. So you are relating two events. Relation is there. That is related to this, this is related to that. But you can do without it also. Cow can be milked without that man being there. Therefore, he says that you are only relating and therefore two points come there. See, a man is watching when the cow is being milked. He remains there till the milking is over. That is the relation. Somebody is needed to milk the cow. That is accepted. This man is not related to the milking of the cow. Milking of the cow is a total thing—the calf, the

cow, and the milkman, all the three are there. And this man is watching. So, he watches so long as the milking is going on. That means you are relating to two points of time. You accept that the milkman is there; milkman is not eliminated.

'As long as a pot serves a purpose, so long it is said to exist. Here also the time is the limiting factor. Thus all objects that are perceived to exist outside are determined by the present or any other time. They are independent of the mind of the perceiver. They are, rather, dependent upon the time in which they exist. ... That a thing exists independently of the perceiving mind is also an idea' (ibid.). That is something strange. A thing exists independently of mind is also an idea. What else is it? Is it a separate object?

At the sensory level all objects are different. At a deeper level, they are not. At the sensory level they are all different but when we penetrate that sensory level to a deeper level, are they really different? Then the knowledge comes that they are not. As mere energy they are not different from each other.

Just like even in the body, the same genetic material becomes the skin, becomes the eye, becomes the nail, and becomes the bone—all these are from the same genetic material. What a wonderful thing it is! Though, outwardly they are all different. Electricity is also a simple energy. As electricity this whole world is nothing but electric energy, vibration of electric energy; nothing else. But that is beyond the sensory vision. Senses reveal to you these differences. Penetrate deeper, there is no difference. That is the main contention.

Vedanta always says that till you investigate these are all real. When you investigate, something else happens. Have the boldness to accept what comes through investigation. That is why many people could not accept twentieth-century physics. It goes against common sense. It goes entirely against common sense. Even that the earth

is flat is common sense. But, that earth is round is science. What a wonderful idea! One discussion is given about the ocean surrounding the earth. What is their magnitude? They look huge, don't they? Compared to the volume of the earth they are nothing. Take an orange, dip it in water, and hold it. A little water sticks to it, that is called the ocean. One example is given, compared to the volume of the earth ocean is just like that. Common sense will not explain these things. You have to go deep. Optical illusions are plenty. In many studies you are given optical illusions. About a particular figure it looks like this, a man is standing there, he looks small. When he remains here, he looks big. But, it is the same thing, there is no difference inside. It is optical illusion.

'That the world existed before I was born or will continue to exist after I die or that many things exist at present of which I am not conscious—these are all mere ideas of the mind at the present time. Past, present and future are nothing but ideas present in the mind at the moment.' (ibid.). We can't jump out of this.

'This can be better understood from the analogy of the dream. A man may dream for five minutes in which time he may see objects existing during as many years' (ibid.). Dream time and the waking time—waking time is five minutes, dream time is five years.

Different objects perceived in dream, answering to different points in time, are but the imagination of the dreamer who only dreams for a few moments. Similarly in the waking state a man, by mere force of imagination, sees objects conforming to different points in time extending over hundreds of years. Though from the waking standpoint dream objects are known to be illusory, yet they are perceived to be actually existing at the time of dream. Similarly, it is quite reasonable to believe in the illusory nature of the waking experience from the standpoint of Truth. There is no difference between the

objects perceived in dream and waking states on account of their possessing a common feature, namely, 'capability of being seen' (ibid.).

Being an object of perception—objects they come and they go. The next shloka says: 'Those that exist within the mind (as mere subjective imaginations) and are known as the unmanifested as well as those that exist without in a manifested form (as perceived objects)—all are mere imaginations, the difference lying only in the sense-organs (by means of which the latter are cognized)' (105). Here you cognise the sense organs, there you get all the hardness, softness—all these distinctions; length, breadth of primary quality, secondary quality—all these come there. But when the sense organs are removed, look at them as they are, everything is changed. That is what science does in this century. The common sense world is gone so far as science is concerned. It is very difficult to say, 'We want common sense, isn't it? There is nothing uncommon as common sense, they say.

You just knock away the human spectacle. Look at the world. Or, for example, suppose you had a sixth sense—magnetic electric sense—the whole world will change for you. None of these things are substantially existing for you. Imagine that and now you look at it from the five senses. There are living beings having one sense, two senses, three senses; you have five. Let us have six senses. You will see things which you don't see now. What you see now you won't see there. That the world is a mere idea will come when you change this whole apparatus of looking at things. This is a particular apparatus—a selective apparatus. You know the sense organs are highly selective. They bring information to you. Mind selects. Some things they select, millions of things they omit.

Otherwise, you will go mad. The amount of sensations coming into the body and the mind are so much that you will be completely overwhelmed. For argument sake we say that they are

there. That is called common sense. Common sense is accepted. But if you want science you'll have to go beyond common sense, if you want to know the truth of things. That is all. A gold object—a bracelet or an ornament—you see it as an ornament. I will say it is gold. It is all just gold. You concentrate on the name and form. I concentrate on the substance. A wave is nothing but water. You may say: 'No, it is a wave.' Go on arguing; that is common sense!

All the distinctions that you see in waking, you also find in dream. This common sense also you get in dream. And a father can scold his child to have some common sense in dream. 'What is, then, the cause of this distinction? It is only due to the difference in the use of sense-organs (by means of which these objects are perceived). Hence, it is established that the objects perceived in the waking state are as much imagination of the mind as those seen in the dream' (ibid.). In dream also you have sense organs. I am perceiving by the sense organs, objects and there are ideas within the mind also. You make the distinction there, but we say it is unreal. That is what we say here, it is unreal.

First of all, is imagined the *Jīva* (the embodied being)—[this ego]—and then are imagined the various entities, objective and subjective, that are perceived. As is (one's) knowledge so is (one's) memory of it. ... What is the source of the imagination of various objects, subjective and objective that are perceived and appear to be related to one another as cause and effect? It is thus explained: The *Jīva* is of the nature of cause and effect and is further characterised by such ideas as, 'I do this, I am happy and I am miserable'. Such *Jīva* is, at first, imagined in the *Ātman* (106).

The *Ātman* is imagined as an individualised entity. From the whole infinite reality of the *Ātman*, a small individualised entity is imagined, that is myself. Then, I have a world around me and I handle it—all these go on. This is what you

call the common experience. So when this little self is knocked away, what remains is the *Ātman*. No world is separate from the *Ātman*. 'Then for the knowledge of the *Jīva* are imagined various existent entities, both subjective and objective ... What is the cause of this imagination? It is thus explained: It, the *Jīva*, who is the product of imagination and competent to effect further imagination' (ibid.).

Buddhists also say that the self is only in imagination. There is no real individual self in me and in you separately. It is a fever. It is an illusion—my separate identity. The word 'individual' in English means undivided entity. That is the original meaning. So I treat myself as an undivided primary entity. But, as I quoted from H G Wells's book: 'Personality [the ego centred in this body] may be only one of nature's methods, a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value.'⁴² It was not there before now and again later on it won't be there, and this ego dies in dream and sleep also. It just dies and again comes in, bobbing up. It is a very strange experience. If you take them for granted and run about the world, then this question never arises. When you become confronted as to what is this, then all these difficulties come.

The search for truth will take you through very hard time. Many pet things have to go. As you see in the Christian sects, 'Oh! This is the only religion, this is the only sect!'; you hold on. When you begin to investigate only, pet ideas will go, but you don't want pet ideas to go. 'My mother is the most beautiful woman'—it is for you, not for all. Keep it to yourself; it is a private opinion. *Matam*, private opinion is *matam*; the other is *tattvam*, what is true, objectively true. This world is all *matam*; you have your world, I have my world, so this goes on.

Knowledge is always followed by a memory, similar to that knowledge. Hence, from the knowledge of the idea of cause results the

knowledge of the idea of effect. Then follows the memory of both cause and effect. This memory is followed by its knowledge which results in the various states of knowledge characterised by action, actor and the effect. These are followed by their memory, which, in its turn, is followed by the states of knowledge. In this way are imagined various objects, subjective and objective, which are perceived and seen to be related to one another as cause and effect.⁴³

Maya comes in there—one Atman divided into thousands and millions of Atmans. Schrödinger said that is maya: One becoming many. It doesn't become, we imagine it to be many. We imagine that we are all separate. In dream how many selves are there? Every fellow is a self there. Isn't it? How many differences do you see there? Wake up, all goes—only one. Through waking up is jnana and in jnana there is no duality. In *ajnana*, ignorance, duality appears. That is the main contention.

'It is seen from common experience that the idea of food and drink is followed by the idea of satisfaction. One is not possible in the absence of the other. Following this method of agreement and difference we imagine thus. From the idea of knowledge of food etc., which is the cause, follows the idea of the knowledge of satisfaction which is the effect' (ibid.). That John Smith, what does John Smith say: A probability function in the fog that it is on the Atlantic. See the language science has to use. I got it from Sir James Jeans. It is the probability function and the probability of finding John Smith and this is only a mental concept and I can travel at the speed of light, more than the speed of light. That is how he uses the word.

Many strange things happen in this nuclear physics. Oppenheimer writes that the electron has an orbit. When an electron is disturbed it changes its orbit. From this orbit it goes to that

orbit. But, the strange thing is that it does not pass through an intervening space while changing the orbit. That is being a ghost. A ghost does not pass through intervening space at all. When a ghost appears, it never passes through this way; the ghost there disappears there and appears here. It never passes through this way. A ghostly figure must be like this, if he is walking, he is Mr so and so and not a ghost. If he walks through this here and came here. But this is the description of an electron. It just disappears at point A and appears at point B, never passing through intervening space. That is the nature of this that is why it is called a ghost. The word 'ghost' is used there, because only ghost behaves like that. The world is more ghostly than we thought it to be. These are all strange conclusions strengthening the Vedantic teachings. That is what I mean to say. But we are afraid of it. We are afraid of the truth and it will be said later on. You are afraid of that which is the end of fear itself. Afraid of the fearless is the language used here. Truth is fearlessness and you are afraid of that. *Abhaya bhaya darshinah*, seeing *bhaya* in that which is *abhaya*. Seeing fear in that which is the source of fearlessness itself. That is it. He is using that word here. Truth is strange. We are attached. These little things, all together are keeping ourselves bound. Like the pressure, atmospheric pressure, keeps us alive, any other pressure will kill us, high or low. Certain fishes live at a certain pressure. Bring them out and they will die. They need that pressure.

(To be continued)

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Vedanta Answers

Swami Smaranananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

[Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. This is a collection of such questions and his answers to them—*Editor*.]

QUESTION: (1) In the Gita you said that Sri Krishna says: 'One should speak in a way as not to hurt people.' If we only try to speak without hurting others, then in this Kaliyuga, I don't think we will ever be able to speak the truth? (2) If a person has no faith but keeps on praying for willpower, one will never get it because one who has no faith in oneself cannot have faith in God. Then, what is the point in praying? Do we conclude that there are limitations in acquiring willpower? Does it mean that not everyone has willpower?

Answer: (1) Even if it is true, the ideal is not to hurt others. It is said: 'Speak the truth, speak what is pleasant, don't speak what is unpleasant.' In such cases silence is golden.

(2) Everyone should learn how to develop willpower. Who asks you not to have faith in yourself? Prayer helps you to strengthen your willpower.

Question: If the ultimate goal of life is moksha, then why can't we go in a path which will lead to moksha than be in this modern world? Do we have moksha even by living in this modern world?

Answer: Each person has to make her or his own choice in life—whether to work for success in the modern world or work for moksha.



Acharya Shankara

Question: Swamiji, it is very hard to balance spirituality and real world. Kindly give some logical answer for this.

Answer: It is no doubt difficult to live a spiritual ideal, but one should have the courage to do so. The choice is yours.

Question: Is willpower developed at the subconscious level, for example when we are asleep? I find that my willpower is stronger when I meditate. What is the connection between the two, I wonder?

Answer: One does not develop willpower while asleep. You will have to work for it, while meditating or by thinking positive thoughts.

Question: There are many books on the Upanishads available in the market. Is it proper to study the Upanishads by ourselves without a guru? If it is not proper to do so, how will one know Brahman?

Answer: You need not go in search of a guru for studying the Upanishads. Read a reliable translation and also if possible, Acharya Shankara's commentary on the principal Upanishads.

Brahman cannot be known as an objective reality. It is to be realised.

Question: In the translation to a *shanti*-mantra, we read: ‘This is infinite. That is infinite.’ What are ‘This’ and ‘That’?

Answer: This mantra—*Om. Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate. Purnasya purnamadaya purnameva avashishyate*—has been interpreted in different ways by various scholars. You may interpret it thus: ‘This’ means the microcosm and ‘That’ means the macrocosm. Or ‘This’ means the phenomenal universe and ‘That’ means which is beyond this universe.

Question: Nowadays, there are many books which support the idea of ‘positive visualisation’. Does positive visualisation improve willpower? Can daydreaming be related to too much of positive thinking?

Answer: I cannot say whether ‘positive visualisation’ improves willpower. Daydreaming and positive thinking are not related to willpower.

Question: I agree that we need sportsmanship to develop willpower. However if a person is continuously failing how should one react? Does not a person need a small setback as tonic to strengthen one’s willpower?

Answer: Swami Vivekananda says that failures are stepping stones to success. You will have to find out which vocation suits you most and then work towards that end.

Question: How to get rid of irrelevant social evils like regionalism, casteism, discrimination by language, and the like, in spite of social pressure to follow such practices.

Answer: Get rid of all such things by broadening your mental horizons.

Question: When a person dies, people talk about only the good aspects of that person but not about the other aspects. Will such talk really help give peace to the deceased person’s soul?

Answer: I don’t know. It is not considered

gentlemanly to talk about the dark side of a dead person.

Question: How should I check myself that I am following the correct way of improving my willpower? Do I need anyone’s guidance? If yes, then whom should I follow?

Answer: Make a checklist of what you should do to improve your willpower and then compare it with your actual behaviour. You may get some guidance from a competent person if available.

Question: Does ‘character’ have any definition? Is it absolute?

Answer: Every thought can have a definition. I think character includes the following: Physical and mental strength, self-confidence, truthfulness, broadening one’s mental horizons, and feeling for others. Read Swami Vivekananda’s books. They will clarify many things.

Question: Will you please explain the concept of ‘differentiating between the essential and the non-essential’ in detail?

Answer: There is no such ‘concept’. All things needed to make us persons of character are essential. Other things are non-essential.

Question: How does *svadhyaya* help in yogic practice?

Answer: If you mean by ‘yogic practice’, *yogasana* and the like, then *svadhyaya* has nothing much to do with such yogic practices. But if you mean the various yogas namely *raja*, *jnana*, *karma*, and *bhakti*, then *svadhyaya*, spiritual and meaningful reading, will help in yogic practice.

Question: Please also tell how to do self-introspection. Is it the analysis of the mind with the mind with just a little background knowledge?

Answer: ‘Introspection’ is turning the mind inwards. Everything you do—good or bad—is done through the mind. So if you have to understand the mind, you must turn your search inwards.

(To be continued)

Swami Premananda's Teachings

Swami Omkareshwarananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

HOUSEHOLDERS STRIVE the entire day bridled by the selfish interests of oneself and one's family. That is why their bondage of work increases. If they performed the worldly duties as service to God, their bondage will fall off gradually. But, Mahamaya's play is such that it is not easy to do! One dies repeating 'mine', 'mine'.

'Virupaksha (Swami Videhananda), who is doing the worship of Sri Ramakrishna now, is a great scholar. But, he used to serve Math's cows earlier. When he went once to Varanasi, Swami Brahmananda had a very high opinion of him when he heard that though a scholar, he used to cut hay for the cows. I too am baking cow-dung balls with you. Shall I ensure my hereafter only by allowing devotees to take the dust of my feet? That is why I gather cow-dung, make cow-dung balls, serve the cows, and also worship Sri Ramakrishna.'

['Compassion is the root of religion and pride is the root of hell.' —Goswami Tulasidas]

'Nothing can come out of pride. So, one should give up pride. I see pride in some of you. Having come to Sri Ramakrishna's shelter, why are you mellowed down? All of you have to become perfect, soft, and egoless. Why would you, of the close circle, be

deprived of spirituality? Fervour, devotion, and love—all have to be softened. Destroy the ego. It is ego that alienates a jiva from God.

'Repeat: "Not me, not me, not me, you are, you are, you are; not me, not me, O Lord, you are, you are—whatever is there, it is you!" How egoless was Sri Ramakrishna! He has taught all through his life, how one should give up the ego. To destroy his ego, he used to carry the

food plates of beggars on his head and throw them into the Ganga. He used to clean the toilets of Dakshineswar Kali temple with his long hair. And see the life of Nag Mahashay! It was only the other day. He did not have even the slightest ego. I like only that kind of life. Fie upon cultivating ego and pride within while wearing the ochre cloth outside! Did Nag Mahashay wear the ochre cloth?

He had become humble with fervour, devotion, and love. "Make my head bow under the dust of your feet"—will these words remain only in books? Girishchandra Ghosh used to say: "When Mahamaya tried to bind Nag Mahashay, he became so small that she could not bind him."

'Four-five days after my first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, I chanced to meet Ramdayal Babu in Baghbazar. He told me: 'The Paramahansa has called you; meet him once.' I was surprised



and asked: 'Has he called me? Why?' I did not understand then that Sri Ramakrishna was so compassionate. Then, I went to Dakshineswar once. Even then he used to address me respectfully and not treat me like a boy that I was. Seeing me, he said: 'Please take these pieces of wood to the Panchavati.' That day, Sri Ramakrishna was to have a picnic in the Panchavati. How much of our ignorance has he dispelled in such a manner!

'Yesterday night I dreamt that Swamiji has come. Seeing him, I started crying and fell at his feet saying: "I will not let you go away this time. You stay. Seeing you India will be awakened once more." I prostrated before Swami Brahmanandaji and said to him: "Maharaj, don't leave Swamiji. He has come after such a long time." And I told Swamiji: "By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, I am getting infinite patience and infinite education."' "

It was nine o' clock in the night. The bell rang for dinner. All prostrated before Baburam Maharaj and all went for having dinner.

Nowadays, Sri Ramakrishna's mind-born son, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Shivananda, and Swami Premananda are staying in Belur Math. It is as if Sri Ramakrishna has embodied himself in these three great personages. Sri Ramakrishna used to call Swami Brahmananda 'the cowherd boy of Vraja' and he used to call Swami Premananda 'the girl-companion of Radha'. Swami Brahmananda and Swami Premananda were among those six persons whom Sri Ramakrishna used to identify as the ever-free or *Ishvarakoti* of the inner circle. Swami Brahmananda is a *paramahansa*, a complete knower of God. The greatest of devotees, Swami Premananda, is devotion incarnate and the greatest of monks, Swami Shivananda, is a great austere monk.

The Math has become a mart of joy day and night because of the presence of these three great persons. There are no bounds or end to this joy. Even before sunrise, sweet devotional songs are

sung by holy monks, brahmacharis, and devotees in proper tune and tempo:

Raga: Sindhu Vijay—Tala: Tevra

Behold! The abode of bliss.

Of unsurpassed beauty,

effulgent beyond samsara's ocean.

Come all tormented by misery

All your woes will be destroyed

You will have peace at heart

There will arise love in you

Many a yogis, rishis, and sages

Are immersed in meditation unknown

Drinking some unknown drink,

They have forgotten this universe.

What nectarine songs sing the gods

I bow down to the Pure and Infinite

Millions of moons and stars

Ceaselessly dance in joy.

Hearing this sweet music, the devotees could actually have a glimpse of the shore of the transmigratory ocean. This is their easy attainment. Sri Krishna has told in the Bhagavadgita: 'O son of Pritha, to that yogi of constant concentration and single-minded attention, who remembers Me uninterruptedly and for long, I am easy of attainment.'¹⁷ The live teachings of the monks before lunch and after that! There were evening vespers, meditation, sweet devotional singing, and the spiritual teachings, especially of Swami Premanandaji. In this manner, day and night passed in joy.

Numerous groups of devotees come from Calcutta to take a dip in the cold Ganga of the company of these holy monks. Their numbers are more, especially on holidays. Today is Sunday, 26 Agrahayana, 12 December 1915. Today is a holiday. That is why many visitors have come. The elderly advocate of Baruipur, Kedar Babu, Dr Kanjilal, Krishna Babu, Kalipada Babu, and many other devotees have come. Since many days, Kedar Babu is staying in the Math.

(To be continued)

References

17. Gita, 8.14.

The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life

Swami Nityasthananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

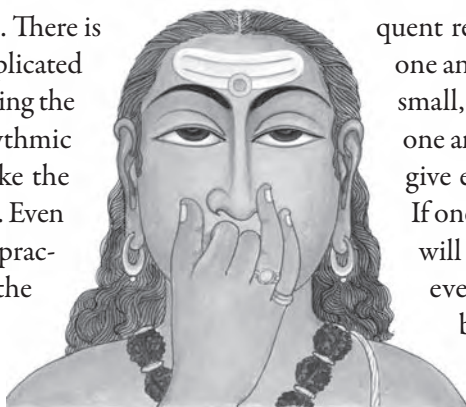
HERE THE MIND is aptly compared to a tree. As the tree is surrounded by creepers, the mind also is full of *vruttis*, different kinds of thought-waves. The tree has its deep roots underground, so is the case with the mind which has its roots in old impressions underneath. As the tree yields sweet and bitter fruits, the mind also gives us both happiness and misery. As the tree consists of flowers of good fragrance, in the mind too we find various virtues and talents. This mind-tree is the product of two kinds of seeds. One is the seed of the activities of the prana, the vital force, which is of vital importance in our personality system, for the vibration of prana affects the mind. Due to the diminution of the activity of prana, the mind too becomes inactive. It is essential that the prana must function harmoniously within the system. If there is some disorder in pranic function, it may give rise to some emotional disturbances or activate some lower impulses. The practice of pranayama will regulate pranic function and make it harmonious in the whole system. There is no need for indulging in complicated practices of pranayama involving the nose. Simple practices of rhythmic breathing are enough to make the prana function harmoniously. Even regular, rhythmic, systematic practice of mantra japa will have the same effect as pranayama.

The other seed is intense thinking. If we continuously

and intensely think of some sense-objects, that will leave a strong impression on the mind. The following verses of the Bhagavadgita very strikingly speak of the consequences of thinking of sense-objects: 'By constantly thinking of sense-objects, an attachment to them is developed, which in turn creates desire. From desire anger comes, which creates delusion, and consequently a person forgets oneself. Then one loses discriminative power and destroys oneself.'²⁹

Constant and intense thinking of sense-objects makes one develop strong attachment to them. This attachment is of two kinds: if we think of the objects that we love, loving attachment is developed; and if we think of objects that we hate, hateful attachment is developed—we also get attached to one whom we hate. And this attachment generates desire—if it is an object that we love, it is the desire to possess or enjoy it; and if it is an object that we hate, it is the desire to harm or destroy it. By no means is it possible

to fulfil all our desires and the consequent result is frustration that makes one angry or short-tempered. Even a small, insignificant event can make one annoyed. One is not able to forgive even small mistakes of others. If one is unable to do anything, one will somehow manage to swallow everything, and of course, start burning within. Otherwise one will have temper tantrums. Frustration is like a



wound in the body. If something strikes on the other parts of the body, we do not feel the pain. But if something is struck on the wound even slightly, it aches intensely. The frustrated person cannot bear any pain.

Apart from the gross desires, there are some undetected subtle desires which impede spiritual progress. Sri Ramakrishna says that even if there is one worldly desire in the mind, it is not possible to realise God. He used to explain this with an example: even if one strand of thread is stretched out, it will not pass through the eye of a needle. The desire for appreciation, seeking the company of people, and fondness for luxury goods and electronic gadgets—these are some subtle desires. When praised by somebody, if we become exceedingly happy, it indicates that we want appreciation. If we become elated when we get some objects, it betrays our desire for it. Unless we analyse the mind dispassionately, it is not possible to detect these subtle desires, and without controlling them we cannot make appreciable progress in spiritual life.

There was a zoo, in which there were some kangaroos within an enclosure. A baby kangaroo always used to come out of the enclosure and play outside. To prevent this, the authority raised the wall of the enclosure. Still the kangaroo was found playing outside. They went on increasing the height of the wall; still it did not solve the problem. The kangaroos that were inside started discussing the matter. ‘How is the height of the wall increasing day by day?’ A kangaroo wondered. Another remarked: ‘Let it increase, no problem, as long as they keep the gate open!’ Similarly, without closing the gates of desires, our spiritual practice will not yield considerable results.

We have to bear different kinds of pain inflicted by different situations in life. Many will hurt us and we too hurt others. This is quite natural. When others hurt us we know it, but we are

not ready to accept that we too are equally capable of hurting others, and this escalates already existing problems. As we expect others to forgive our mistakes, we also should forgive others’ mistakes and not allow the pain to continue. The feeling of hurt will continue and aggravate if one goes on thinking: ‘That person hurts me by harsh words’, ‘Some person hurts me by misbehaviour’, or ‘That person harmed me greatly’. We should not be like a monkey that goes on scratching its wound. If we allow the hurt to continue and nurture it by brooding over it, then everything becomes painful to us. Therefore we must learn to forgive others.

The Problem of Ego

Ego is a great stumbling block in forgiving others. It does not allow one to accept one’s mistakes and forgive others’ mistakes. In every conflicting situation it asserts itself: ‘I am completely right and you are completely wrong’. It is so blind to the fact that when all others are making mistakes, it is not possible that I alone am free from it. Being ensnared by the ego one cannot give it up even if suffering much due to that. The saying goes: ‘Temper leads one to trouble and ego keeps one there.’ It possesses one like a ghost. A ghost can be exorcised, but not the ego. As Sri Ramakrishna says, a ghost can be exorcised using mustard seeds but if the ghost resides in the mustard seed itself, what can be done? The ego is to be eliminated by the ego alone—it is like the ego committing suicide! One can kill others, but how can one kill oneself? Just like the salt-doll losing itself in the ocean, the ego is to be melted in the ocean of consciousness and the process of doing this is spiritual life.

(To be continued)

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29. Gita, 2.62–3.

TRADITIONAL TALES

It is Not Good to Forget Good Done to You

THE BIRD RAJADHARMA had a great heart. Even a demon performed his duties. But, the brahmana, Gautama injured even those who helped him.

This is an ancient story. There lived ages ago, a brahmana named Gautama. Though he was a brahmana, his actions were worse than that of an outcaste. His father was a great scholar. However, Gautama was not interested in studies. He wandered as he wished. In the beginning he begged for his food. Once he went to the city of outcastes. He took a liking to a widow there, married her and started living there happily. He took to the vocation of hunting birds and animals.

One day, a great brahmana scholar met Gautama. He took pity on Gautama, who was doing the abominable work of hunting though born in a brahmana family. He advised Gautama: 'Give up the sinful act of torturing mute animals.' Gautama heeded the advice and started searching for another means of earning his livelihood. He chanced to see a group of merchants who were on their way to business. Gautama joined this group. Mad elephants attacked them. All ran for their lives. There was no count of the number

of merchants who died. Gautama too fled and started wandering in a dense forest.

It turned out to be a great time for Gautama because that forest was special in many ways. Gautama was attracted by various trees laden with fruits, fragrant flowers, and birds that sang sweetly. He ate some fruits to his heart's content and went to the shade of a tree for taking rest. It was a banyan tree. In that forest lived Rajadharma, a crane and also the son of Rishi Kashyapa. Gautama had come to rest under the same tree where Rajadharma used to rest. This too was Gautama's good fortune.

Evening set in. Rajadharma, with colourful and attractive wings, came to his usual resting place. Returning from Brahma's abode, he saw a guest having come to his house. With great joy, he welcomed Gautama in the language of human beings and saluted him. He introduced himself to Gautama.

Then, Rajadharma made a soft bed for Gautama out of tender leaves and fragrant flowers. He offered pleasing hospitality to Gautama and fed him. Gautama ate food to his great satisfaction and lay down on the bed made for him.

Immediately, Rajadharma started fanning him with his wings. Gautama had a nice sleep. Rajadharma could understand Gautama's poor condition. Rajadharma advised Gautama, who was in search of wealth, to meet his demon-friend Virupaksha, whose residence was three miles away from that place.

Early morning the next day, Gautama set out for Virupaksha's residence. Learning that Gautama was sent by his friend Rajadharma, Virupaksha welcomed him happily and offered him hospitality. He organised a grand feast. Then, enquiring after Gautama's needs, Virupaksha gave him more money than he desired. Gautama returned with a sack of money given by the demon king Virupaksha. On his way back, he again came to Rajadharma's abode. Like before, this time too, Rajadharma welcomed him and gave him a grand feast. Rajadharma feared that if he and Gautama fell asleep, wild animals could kill Gautama. Hence, just after Gautama fell asleep, Rajadharma lit a fire nearby. Afterwards, Rajadharma fell into deep sleep lying on the ground.

Gautama woke up in the middle of the night, his sleep being disturbed. He started thinking in his usual evil manner: 'My house is far away. Out of greed, I have brought much wealth. It is not clear whether I will get anything to eat on the way. I do not have any food with me. It would be best to kill this fat crane and take it along with me.' Immediately, he killed Rajadharma. He removed his feathers and threw them away. The evil Gautama roasted Rajadharma's body and took it with him and set on his journey towards his house.

Not seeing Rajadharma for two consecutive nights, Virupaksha got concerned and told his son: 'My child! My bosom-friend Rajadharma has the habit of going to Brahma's abode daily and salute Brahma there. On his way back, he never misses dropping by our house and seeing me. However, he has not come here for two days now.

I do not know the reason. I am very disturbed. I don't think that Gautama, the person sent by him, is a good man. Go and find about Rajadharma.'

The demon's son went to Rajadharma's abode, along with his other demon friends. He surmised the happenings by seeing Rajadharma's wings lying there. He immediately went in pursuit of Gautama and caught him in no time. The demon's son took Gautama and presented him before his father.

Virupaksha fainted on seeing his friend's roasted body. Friends and acquaintances were all disturbed and started crying profusely. Regaining consciousness, the demon-king Virupaksha said: 'O demons! Kill this brahmana and eat his flesh.' Hearing this, the demons prayed with folded hands: 'O king! We will not eat this sinner's body. If we eat this thankless person's body, we too would become sinners. Hence, hand him over to the outcastes.'

When Virupaksha tried to offer Gautama's body to the outcastes, they said: 'O king! We also don't want this ungrateful person's flesh. That flesh would not be desired by any bird, animal, or even a worm. Therefore, we do not need it.' Finally, Gautama's body was put in a deep pit.

The demon-king Virupaksha rose honourably to set fire to Rajadharma's pyre made out of fragrant sandalwood. But, before that, there arrived Indra and Kamadeva. A nectarine foam poured out of Kamadeva's mouth and fell on the pyre. A miracle happened as that foam fell on Rajadharma's body. His wings grew in lustre more than ever before. Rajadharma rose to life and became aware of what had happened. He requested Indra to give life to Gautama too. Praising the great heart of Rajadharma, Indra gave life to Gautama also.

Holy men do good to even those who cause harm to them. They bless and make even ungrateful sinners mend their ways and attain goodness.



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy

Katerina Kolozova

Foreword by François Laruelle

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York City, New York 10023. USA. www.cup.columbia.edu. 2014. 208 pp. HB. \$50. ISBN 9780231166102.

This book pioneers a feminist reading from the non-philosophical perspective. François Laruelle's path-breaking paradigm is situated within the gender studies' context by himself in his foreword while defining 'sexed gender' as a 'non-standard conception, which is a truly generic conception of "gender" itself, which recognizes the mark of the real' (xi). Laruelle sets the tone for this rigorously exacting volume by giving precedence to experience over everything else: 'It seems possible to us in this way to extract the nuance of the queer from its traditional philosophical context—to remove it from that frame and bring it back to a humane or generic level' (xvi). Katerina Kolozova critiques the 'postmodern or poststructuralist philosophy' for abandoning 'any attempt to think the real by proclaiming it unthinkable' (5). Kolozova follows Laruelle to align 'rigorous theory ... with the real' (ibid.).

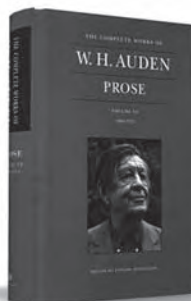
Kolozova envisions a coming together of the one and the multiple: 'The instance of continuity in its immanence functions as a unifying force for the self or the subjective processuality' (47). The core theme of gender studies or feminist debates is the either/or of sex and gender. The author succinctly clarifies this dichotomy: 'The dichotomy between sex and gender reflects and reproduces the opposition between the real and the unreal' (52). Analysing Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Kolozova holds that Butler's text 'is symptomatic of the dichotomy of the real and fiction' (54). However,

Kolozova is happy with *Undoing Gender* (2004) as here Butler's 'thinking seems to be relieved of this unnecessary burden' of 'the real and the imagined' (77). Juxtaposing Laruelle with Deleuze, Kolozova prefers the former due to his preference to the 'determination in the last instance' (63).

This work is an intersection of gender studies, philosophy, culture studies, with pertinent aspects of subjectivity. Anyone interested in any of these fields or connected with the humanities should read this book to understand that the 'non-philosophical discourse implies a constitutive entanglement of the real with the transcendental' (146).

Editor

Prabuddha Bharata



The Complete Works of W. H. Auden: Prose: Volume VI, 1969-1973

Ed. Edward Mendelson
Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. www.press.princeton.edu. 2015. 808 pp. HB. \$65. ISBN 9780691164588.

A *Certain World*, which inaugurates this volume of Auden's prose is 'a map of ... [Auden's] planet' (3). He quotes Simone Weil: 'To pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself.' Two other gems from this section are important for understanding the hitherto unknown religious Auden, *Nature of Prayer*: 'Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are' (Ortega y Gasset) and 'To pray is to think about the meaning of life' (Ludwig Wittgenstein) (235). Auden's choice of the mystic Weil, the deeply transcendental phenomenologist Gasset, and the deeply Catholic Wittgenstein, shows the value he put on the *vita contemplativa*. Yet in classrooms where Auden is taught—mostly his *Musee des Beaux Arts*—students are not sensitised to Auden's religious quest. *A*

Certain World sparkles when compared to Thomas Merton's voluminous *Journals*. While Merton is cynical and mostly without wit, Auden laughs at himself and the world: 'If the rich could hire other people to die for them, the poor could make a wonderful living.' (Yiddish proverb, 203). Unlike Merton's nagging soul-searching, Auden promised us to 'let others, more learned, intelligent, imaginative, and witty' tell his life story. Letting others speak throughout, Auden has revised the genre of the autobiography here. *A Certain World* is in the tradition of the early modern commonplace book. His oeuvre both as poet and prose-writer shows a continuum with what is now neglected in literary studies—the study or reading of literature itself. Like literature, there is nothing *certain* about Auden.

There is nary a better introductory essay on George Herbert than Auden's *Introduction* to Herbert (562–7). Rosemond Tuve and Helen Gardner pale in comparison to Auden's assessment of Herbert, being only equal to T S Eliot's understanding of Herbert. Auden's genius in understanding Herbert is borne out by his statement that Herbert's poems 'cannot be judged by aesthetic standards alone', since 'all of Herbert's poems are concerned with the religious life' and they are 'the counterpart of Jeremy Taylor's prose' (564). Three points emerge from these observations on Herbert: Auden was convinced that there are standalone aesthetic standards which are sufficient for a work of art to exist *sui generis*—since *poetry makes nothing happen*—religion can produce beautiful literature which surpasses Chaucer's caricatures of religion and Jeremy Taylor's prose is art.

Edward Mendelson needs to be better known among English literature students than Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler, and Terry Eagleton. Literature is hard back-breaking work having little to do with reading snappy papers using presentation software or commenting on what Derrida might have thought of Auden. It has everything to do with understanding Robert Browning's *A Grammarian's Funeral*. If Mendelson's clarion call does not convert self-professed literature scions, nothing will.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

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Interdisciplining Digital Humanities: Boundary Work in an Emerging Field

Julie Thompson Klein

University of Michigan Press, 839
Greene Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan
48104–3209. USA. www.press.umich.edu. 2015. 218 pp. HB. \$70. ISBN
9780472072545.

The best way to test scholarship is to remove paywalls and put up one's academic work online. Plagiarists and snobs will scoff at these suggestions. Hence Julie Thompson Klein had to write *A Culture of Recognition* (144–51). The histrionics regarding the value of web scholarship she documents at the Modern Language Association and the Council of the American Historical Association are worth noting. Thompson Klein's book is the single most important book on the subject of web scholarship available now and should complement the *MLA Handbook*. Is it believable that in this era of webinars and countless online tools for academics, one needs to beg donors from the 'developed' countries for doles to study the humanities in their nations? One should get rid of seminars—huge wastes of money—all sorts of 'prestigious' scholarships and halt the demeaning culture of begging. It does an academician no good to beg to read a paper at some conference at an 'established' university. As Klein mentions, what we need is the *computational turn* in the humanities (63). Those who still go to libraries to study in original some medieval manuscripts are potential dangers to their own domains. What if one spoils the manuscript? Why not use digital tools to study it from one's own laptop? A thorough study of Klein's text will hopefully open some perennially shut eyes.

Andy Engel's *Resourcing* at the end of the book is valuable to beginners who want to learn the techne of doing digital humanities.

The cultural work of Klein is to chronicle and even inaugurate a new era in reading, scholarship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. After Gutenberg's press, the Internet is the biggest event in the world. Her book will be remembered

as one of the first texts to chronicle the inevitable. Everyone can now study and network with like-minded scholars. Nepotism, political favouritism, and all sorts of cronyism in getting published, crucial for tenure, are going to be eased out through the Internet.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay



**The Complete Works of
W. H. Auden: Prose:
Volume V, 1963-1968**
Ed. Edward Mendelson

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. www.press.princeton.edu. 2015. 608 pp. HB. \$65. ISBN 9780691151717.

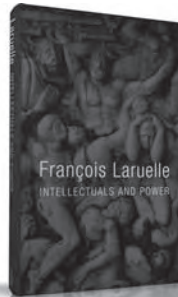
It is fascinating to read Auden's opinions on Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (7-8). Both Browning and Auden have been forgotten by Indian humanists. Auden's huge prose-corpus is unknown to even admirers of his poetry. Edward Mendelson and Princeton University Press have done literature a big service by publishing the prose of Auden in these definitive volumes.

Auden, like every great writer, engages with that one problem which matters most according to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev. This is the problem of evil. Auden's 'Good and Evil in *The Lord of the Rings*' (331-5) is worth careful reading to understand fairy tales, to understand the role of the family in creating stable societies, and the dialectics of the Kantian good and the bad. Auden's prose in this essay takes on a universal sheen.

Auden's prose is a plea against xenophobia, ethnic cleansing, and fascism. He celebrates the family as a locus for self-actualisation; indeed of agape.

Research scholars and general readers will be swept away by Auden's range of reading and Mendelson's scrupulous editing. This definitive volume should be in all English departments throughout the world.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay



Intellectuals and Power

François Laruelle
in conversation with
Philippe Petit

Polity Press, 65 Bridge Street, Cambridge CB2 1UR. UK. www.politybooks.com. 2015. xxvi + 155 pp. PB. \$19.95. ISBN 9780745668413.

Are we not all tired of the endless rantings of 'intellectuals' in the electronic media at the slightest act of injustice? To what end do these 'guardians of knowledge' express their opinions? These and many other questions are critically explored in this volume, which is the outcome of long conversations of Philippe Petit with François Laruelle.

The translator Anthony Paul Smith tells in his preface that 'Laruelle marks a difference between what he terms dominant intellectuals, who carry various adjectives like engaged, humanitarian, right-wing, left-wing, etc., and what he terms the determined intellectual. ... The determined intellectual is an intellectual whose character is determined in the sense of conditioned or driven by his or her relationship to the victim' (xiv-v). It is this attempt to relate to the victim that propels him to 'undertake ... a philosophical re-contextualization of the intellectual' (5). He ventures to classify intellectuals 'on a philosophical basis, a true *intellectual function*' (7). He is concerned with the overarching 'mediatization' of the intellectual.

This book aims to see how the victim and the 'identity of the Real' are wedded to philosophers and intellectuals. Towards this aim Laruelle does not 'leave philosophy to its own authority' just as he does not 'leave theology or religious beliefs to their own authorities' (119). A militant activist related to the victim is Laruelle's vision: 'The non-humanitarian intellectual is not necessarily someone who would refuse to go to demonstrations, someone who would refuse to sign petitions. He looks for another usage. He can absolutely participate in these things, but he will not limit his own action to the belief that sustains them' (131). Anyone concerned with the suffering needs to dive deep into this book.

Editor

Prabuddha Bharata

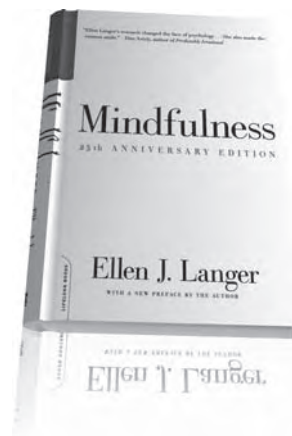
MANANA

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Mindfulness

Ellen J Langer

Da Capo Press, 44 Farnsworth Street, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02210 USA. 2014. xxvi + 246 pp. \$ 15.99. PB.
ISBN 9780738217994.



THE IMPORTANCE OF mindfulness in interpersonal relationships extends beyond our friends and family. In the workplace it may seem that some people are smart or skillful or competent and that others are not. Some ‘have it’, and others just don’t. As a result, we believe that the latter group needs to be told what to do, and we give up all that they might teach us.

What would happen if everyone were equally respected and encouraged to be mindful? We tested this with symphony orchestras, which are generally hierarchical. In one orchestra each player was told to make the piece of music she or he was to play new in very subtle ways that only that player would recognize. The other orchestra was to try to replicate a past performance of the same piece of music that its members felt was particularly good. The performances were taped and then played for audiences unaware of the experiment. In addition, all of the musicians were given a questionnaire asking them how much they enjoyed their performance. Audiences overwhelmingly preferred playing it mindfully. The importance of this work for group process occurred to me only when writing up the research paper. One might think that if everyone essentially did it ‘their own way’, the result would be chaos. (They were playing classical music, not jazz.) Nevertheless, when everyone

did it their own way, making it new in very subtle ways, each person became more present in the same moment, and the result was a superior coordinated performance.

Our stereotypes may hide other people’s talents from us. As a result they can suffer feelings of inadequacy, and we lose all they could contribute to a group’s performance.

The successful leader may be the person who recognizes that we all have talents and who thus sees her or his main job as encouraging mindfulness in those being led. What is it about leaders that makes them effective? In one study we considered women and leadership. Women have the special problem that if they act like men and are strong, they may be disliked, but if they act in a traditional female way, they may be seen as weak. We had women learn a persuasive speech that they gave until they knew it cold (mindlessly). We videotaped it each time they gave it. Half of them were instructed to behave in a strong male-like or caring female-like way when they gave the speech. We showed the final overlearned, mindless version to some people, and to others we showed an earlier version in which the women paid attention to their style of delivery, the mindful version. The results were clear. All that mattered was whether or not they were mindful. When mindful, whether male- or female-like in their

demeanor, they were evaluated as charismatic, trustworthy, and genuine—important characteristics of good leaders. Simply put, people find us more attractive when we are mindful.

We typically consider creativity and innovation, whether at work or in the arts, as the province of a few. Mindfulness can encourage creativity when the focus is on the process and not the product. As an example of how mindlessness might curtail innovation, consider a company trying to make a glue that instead produced a substance that failed to adhere well. It could have been written off as a failure. Not so for 3M engineers, however, who created the Post-It note by taking advantage of the product's ability not to adhere like glue. Mindlessness typically handicaps many of our efforts. First, we may have too rigid expectations of what we're trying to do; second, when something doesn't work as planned, we presume it is a failure; and third, we assume that the result has no use. A very basic and mindless error that we often make is to take the names we give to products/things as the things themselves. In one experiment we gave a group of people products that had not succeeded in the marketplace. To one group we showed the 'failed' product and asked what they would do with it. Most said they would move on to something else. A second group was asked what they would *do* with the failed product (e.g., a glue that fails to adhere). Some were now more innovative. When we presented the properties of the item to a third group with no mention of its original purpose (name), even more people were able to come up with mindful suggestions.

Trying to remain mindful in all that we do may seem exhausting. In many talks I've given over the years, people shudder when I say we should be mindful virtually all the time. They think it's hard work. I believe that being mindful is not hard, but rather it may seem hard because

of the anxious self-evaluation that we add. 'What if we can't figure it out?' Anxiety creates stress, and stress is exhausting. Mindfulness is not. Being mindful allows us to be joyfully engaged in what we are doing. Time races by, and we feel fully alive.

Social psychologists argue that who we are at any one time depends mostly on the context in which we find ourselves. But who creates the context? The more mindful we are, the more we can create the contexts we are in. When we create the context, we are more likely to be authentic. Mindfulness lets us see things in a new light and believe in the possibility of change. When we feel locked into strict work procedures and rules, we can recognize that these were once decisions made by certain individuals. These people lived at a particular point in history, with particular biases and needs. If we realized this, more of us would consider redesigning our work to fit our skills and lives. Company policy was once simply someone's best effort and does not have to be set in stone. By putting people back in the equation, by seeing that categories are made by people, we recognize that almost everything is mutable. Work feels more like play, and play seems as valuable as work. Consider a sign that says 'Keep off the grass'. Most people mindlessly follow that command. Now consider if the sign said 'Ellen says keep off the grass'. We then might ask, 'Who is Ellen, and would she really mind if today I sat on her lawn? Can I negotiate with her?' As far as I'm concerned, the answer to such questions is always 'yes'. The more we realize that most of our views of ourselves, of others, and of presumed limits regarding our talents, our health, and our happiness were mindlessly accepted by us at an earlier time in our lives, the more we open up to the realization that these too can change. And all we need do to begin the process is to be mindful.



REPORTS

News of Branch Centres

Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the kitchen-cum-dining-hall at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad** on 13 February 2016.

Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated, in the presence of Swami Shivamayyananda and others, the vocational-training-cum-production centre of **Ramakrishna Math, Baghbazar** on 25 March. The unit is located at Pranakrishna Mukherjee Lane, Kolkata.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the exhibition on Swami Vivekananda at **Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur** on 1 March.

Ramakrishna Math, Chandipur held the inaugural function of its yearlong centenary celebration on 10 March, the sacred birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, with special puja, a procession, a public meeting, and cultural events. About 8,000 people attended the programmes. A seminar for teachers was held on 12 March in which 160 teachers took part. On 20 March Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the first floor on Vivekananda Hall and presided over a youth convention which was attended by 190 youths.

Ramakrishna Math, Chennai distributed buttermilk and sharbat to about 37,000 people on 20 and 21 March on the occasion of the annual Ratha Yatra and other celebrations of Sri Kapaleeshwarar Temple, Chennai. The centre also conducted a cleaning programme on the temple's campus on 21 March.

Students of polytechnic at **Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai** participated in the Inter Polytechnic Athletic Association (IPAA)

Divisional Tournament 2015-16 organised by the Department of Technical Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, and won in the following games: Kho-Kho (secured 1st place), Hand Ball (secured 1st place), Ball Badminton (secured 2nd place), Cricket (secured 3rd place), and Kabaddi (secured 3rd place). The students also participated in IPAA Divisional Athletic Meet and won 22 prizes in different events. The college also secured the Overall Championship for Sports and Games and Overall Championship for Athletics awards in the tournament. Further, in the Inter-Division Sports Meet they secured first place in Kho-Kho and March Past events, and three prizes in athletic events. Trophies, medals, and certificates were issued to the winners and the college.

King Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain, conducts, on its campus, a programme called Model United Nations (MUN) which is a simulation of the workings of different organs of the United Nations. In that programme, delegates representing a country or an international organisation debate on issues of international relevance. A student of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai** participated as chairperson of the Human Rights Council in the fourth edition of MUN which was held from 2 to 5 February.

College of Arts and Science of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalyaya, Coimbatore** has been re-accredited by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) with Grade 'A'.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) held its 'Expression Series' competition with Swami Vivekananda as the theme on 12 January. A class-9 student of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar** participated in it and was awarded a certificate of merit and a sum of

2,500 rupees for his essay on Swamiji in Sanskrit.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the first floor of the girls' high school building of **Matri Mandir and Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, Jayrambati** on 23 February.

Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the multipurpose hall on the first floor of the high school building at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarpukur** on 12 February, the holy Saraswati Puja day. An interactive digital board for conducting online classes for students was also inaugurated on the same day.

Swami Gautamananda inaugurated the staff quarters, 'Swami Ramakrishnananda Bhavan' at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kadapa** on 12 March.

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University conducted a national seminar on the three major schools of Vedanta from 29 February to 3 March. Sri E S L Narasimhan, governor of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, inaugurated the seminar, and Swami Suhitananda presided over the inaugural meeting. Special lectures on different Vedantic texts were also held from 1 to 5 March.

Values Education and Youth-related Programmes

Ramakrishna Math, Cooch Behar held a youth convention on 7 February in which 584 students took part.

Ramakrishna Mission, Delhi conducted (i) A two-day training programme in values education for 115 teachers of government schools on 19 and 20 January, (ii) A youth convention on 30 January in which 750 youths participated, (iii) Two workshops for school principals on 17 and 18 February which were attended altogether by 106 teachers, mainly principals.

Ramakrishna Mission, Jammu held values


education programmes in Udhampur, Jammu, and Samba districts on 5, 13 and 17 February, which were attended altogether by 1,550 people.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem conducted values education programmes at three colleges in Salem district from 27 January to 19 February. In all, 810 students attended the programmes.

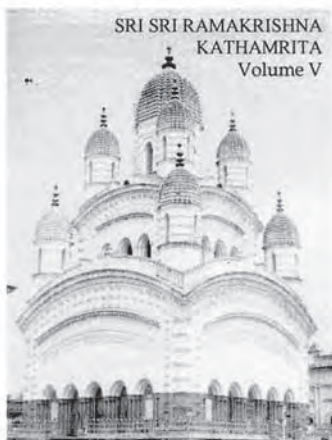
Relief

Fire Relief · Assam: (a) **Guwahati** centre distributed, on 6 February, 34 saris, 15 dhotis, 32 blankets, 64 plates, 64 bowls, and 32 tumblers among 10 families affected by an accidental fire at Maligaon locality in Guwahati. (b) On 8 February, **Silchar** centre distributed 18 saris, 13 blankets, 13 mosquito-nets, 27 plates, 27 tumblers, 7 kg milk powder, and 27 packets of biscuits among 13 families whose houses had been destroyed in a fire at Ashrama Road in Silchar town.

Distress Relief · The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Baghbazar:** 3,030 saris from 4 October to 26 January. (b) **Bhopal:** 797 shirts and 375 trousers from 14 to 16 February. (c) **Chandigarh:** 514 shirts and 333 trousers from 1 to 25 February. (d) **Khetri:** Clothes, shoes, and socks to 150 children on 31 January. (e) **Limbdi:** 1,194 shirts and 626 trousers from 10 to 24 February. (f) **Medinipur:** 180 saris and 55 dhotis from 10 October to 30 January. (g) **Nagpur:** 80 bars of bathing soap and 40 detergent cakes. (h) **Naora:** 4,041 textbooks on 7 February. (i) **Rahara:** 8 saris, 204 chaddars, 6 mosquito-nets, 212 bed-sheets, 204 tubes of toothpaste, 204 bars of soap, and 150 phials of coconut oil from 2 to 16 January. (j) **Sargachhi:** 7 saris from 25 November to 3 December. (k) **Sarisha:** 129 dhotis and 100 trousers from 12 October to 21 December.

Economic Rehabilitation · The following centres distributed the items given below to poor and needy people: **Antpur:** 106 sets of dhadda (weaving accessory), 16 rickshaw trolleys, and 91 sewing machines from 5 October to 9 February; **Rahara:** 1 sewing machine in January. 

Correction · June 2016, p. 534: Read Cyclone Relief instead of Flood Relief.



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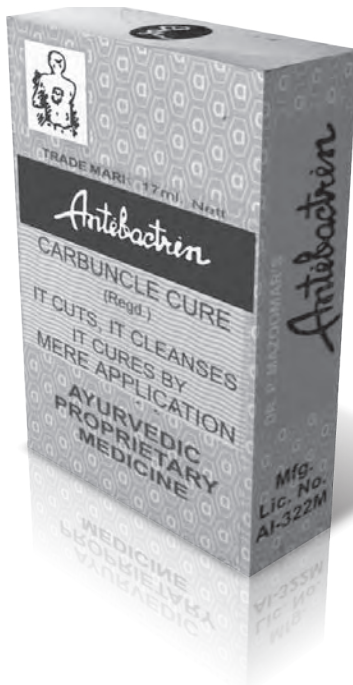


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Apart from its religious and spiritual activities, the Ashrama runs a primary school for poor students numbering around 250. We plan to enlarge our activities in the field of education, child health, personality development, and skill training for young girls and boys. But first we are in urgent need of funds to repair and renovate of the old buildings. Owing to their poverty, the local people are unable to contribute financially for these noble causes.

We therefore appeal to the generous citizens, philanthropic organisations and business houses, to contribute liberally for the welfare of the poor and the under-privileged sections of the society, in a spirit as envisioned by Swami Vivekananda – "To serve man is, to serve GOD", which means "Manav Seva is Madhav Seva". Donations to the Ramakrishna Math (Mekhliganj) are exempt from Income Tax under section 80G of Income Tax Act 1961. Cheques/Demand Drafts/M.O. may kindly be drawn in favour of Ramakrishna Math (Yogodyan) and send to the address mentioned below.

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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

— Swami Vivekananda



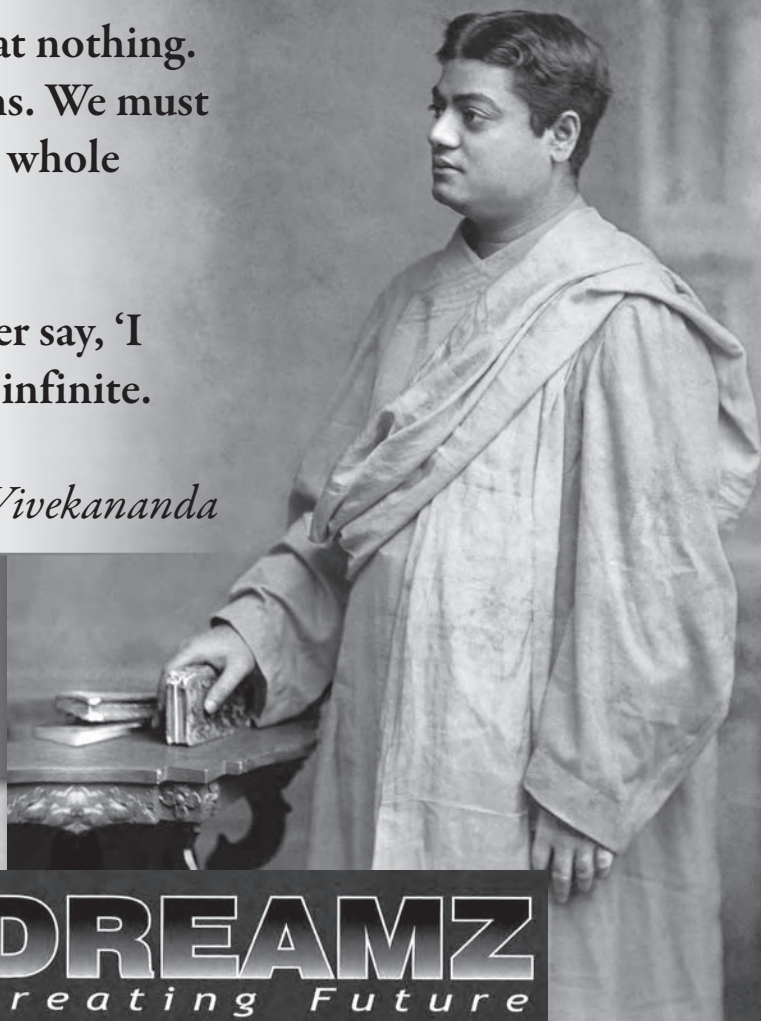
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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